



Court overturns conviction of Bashir in Bali bombings

Obusan preserved folk dance forms

By Lito B. Zulueta

NATIONAL ARTIST FOR DANCE RAMON A. OBUSAN, who died on Thursday of cardiopulmonary arrest, was a tireless researcher and archivist of Filipino folk dance forms and expressions, often committing them on film, video and sound recording so as to preserve their sounds and sights for posterity, especially for the new genera-

OBUSAN / A8

Moviegoers pick best local film of the year

6 people hurt in 18-vehicle pileup in Parañaque City

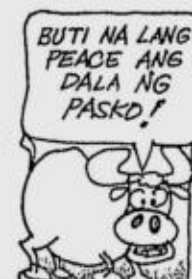
Mactan Island offers divers' paradise



2007 a turbulent year, say feng shui experts

HONG KONG—FORGET fund flows and profit predictions, 2007 is about "fire sitting on water." Buy oil, avoid metals, and don't get your fingers burned.

Feng shui experts steeped in the ancient Chinese knowledge of geo-



2007 / A8



Saturday, December 23, 2006

★★

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website: inquirer.net

US cancels war games with RP over Smith custody issue

By Volt Contreras and Christine O. Avendaño

THE CHIEF OF THE US PACIFIC COMMAND canceled on Thursday the annual RP-US war games as a result of the refusal of the Makati Regional Trial Court and the Court of Appeals to return to US

custody an American soldier convicted of raping a Filipino woman.

The US Embassy in Manila yesterday confirmed the announcement of Adm. William Fallon who, according to a New York Times report, canceled next year's joint Balikatan exercises over the custody of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith.

"It is true we are going to cancel the Balikatan 2007 as the issue of protection for US servicemen remains in doubt," embassy spokesperson Matthew Lussenhop said when reached by the INQUIRER.

"It would not be prudent to bring additional US troops for that exercise," Lussenhop said.

The announcement was seen as a direct offshoot of a seething legal dispute in Manila on how the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement, a 1999 document governing the conduct of the joint exercises, should apply to the convicted Marine.

Ed Malaya, spokesperson of the De-

partment of Foreign Affairs, said it had yet to be "officially notified" of the cancellation as of 3 p.m. yesterday, and declined to issue a statement.

Malacañang also declined to comment, but Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the US government did what it

US CANCELS / A8



GOV. Vicente Valera: Whereabouts still unknown.

Abra gov linked to solon's murder



RUFINO Panday: Promised P100,000 for hit. ANC-TV GRAB

Bayan Muna leader slain in Sorsogon

SORSOGON CITY—YET ANOTHER activist was killed yesterday morning—the third in Sorsogon province in two weeks—and the manner of his death was particularly brutal.

Francisco Bantog, provincial chair of the militant party-list group Bayan Muna in Sorsogon, was shot 20 times by yet unidentified men in Barangay Dancalan in Donsol town, police reported.

Donsol is known for the whale sharks (*butanding*) that gather in its waters at certain times of the year, drawing both local and foreign tourists.

Bantog was a butanding interaction officer (BIO), whose duty is to guide tourists wanting to see the whale sharks up close and ensure that the gentle creatures are

BAYAN MUNA / A6

PNP chief says info not enough to charge Valera

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

AN ARRESTED FORMER SOLDIER has implicated Abra Gov. Vicente Valera, possibly as mastermind, in the assassination of Rep. Luis "Chito" Bersamin and his bodyguard, Philippine National Police Director General Oscar Calderon said yesterday.

Calderon said retired Army M/Sgt. Rufino Panday had confessed to being part of the plot to kill Bersamin and had identified four others involved. Bersamin had reportedly planned on contesting the Abra gubernatorial race next year.

Bersamin, 62, and his bodyguard, SPO1 Alfonso Ortega, 49, were gunned down on Dec. 16 as they emerged from the Mt. Carmel Church in New Manila, Quezon City, after attending the wedding of the congressman's niece.

However, Calderon admitted Panday's confession was not sufficient to file a case against the 61-year-old Valera. He said Panday had told investigators that his information concerning Valera was relayed by Freddie Dupo, a former vice mayor of Abra's La Paz town. Dupo remains at large with the rest of the suspects.

"We are still strengthening the case, the statement (implicating Valera) came from another person (Dupo)," Calderon said in a news conference. He said police still had to gather evidence

ABRA GOVERNOR / A6



THE BODY of Rep. Luis Bersamin Jr. is met by his grieving mother, grandchild, brother-in-law and other relatives at the family's ancestral home in Bangad, Abra.

TOOTS SOBERANO/INQUIRER NORTHERN LUZON

New houses, hope for typhoon survivors

By Delma L. Peyra
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LEGAZPI CITY—THE NEW HOMES have given survivors new hope.

Gawad Kalinga (GK) yesterday awarded a resettlement site for 225 survivors of Barangay Padang, which was wiped out three weeks ago by mudslides from Mayon Volcano. A total of 163 villagers remain missing.

GK is an initiative by the Couples for Christ focused on the building of houses and sustainable communities for the poor.

The resettlement site is in Barangay Taysan, a hilly, elevated portion of this city. During the award ceremonies, entertainer Bimbo Cerudo, a native of Oas, Albay, sang "May Bukas Pa," whose bitter-sweet melody and lyrics reminded the audience of their loss, moving them to tears.

The occasion was graced by Vice President Noli de Castro, who is also Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) chair, Albay Gov. Fernando Gonzales, Legazpi Mayor Noel Rosal and other officials.

In less than a week, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) personnel were able to build at least 400 temporary shelters consisting of wooden frames, tarpaulin walls and galvanized iron roofs in a one-hectare property owned by the city government.

Part of the 270-truck Malacañang-led Mayon Mercy Caravan, the MMDA contingent arrived on Dec. 14 and would reportedly spend the holidays here, away from their family, to meet the deadline for these shelters.

NEW HOUSES / A6

AFP truce just a ploy, says Sison

JOSE MA. SISON, THE NETHERLANDS-based founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines, dismissed the government's declaration of a four-day unilateral ceasefire this holiday season.

The 67-year-old Sison said that guerrillas of the New People's Army would only observe the truce if security forces would stop encroaching on rebel camps.

"It's like a (psychological warfare) tactic, because before the ceasefire declaration, if you remember, (Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes) Esperon himself said that the military will not declare a ceasefire," Sison told ABS-CBN television.

On Thursday, President Macapagal-Arroyo approved a unilat-

AFP TRUCE / A6



STAR LIGHT, GUITAR BRIGHT

A young boy totes these sparkling stars, glittering guitars and flashing cell phones that would make any Christmas tree, handbag or car the brightest of them all.

ARNOLD ALMACEN

Changing Pinoy view on dawn Mass noted

By Christian V. Esguerra

A BANNER STRUNG ABOVE THE entrance of a low-end strip club in Caloocan City reads: "Simbang Gabi."

Male patrons who frequent the place know right away that this has nothing to do with the annual dawn Mass. Riding on the popularity of the season's *simbang gabi*, it is instead an invitation to an upcoming show featuring girls in various stages of undress.

With such establishments usually closing at 4 a.m., it's not impossible that some male guests—after a wild night at the strip club—might end up begging for grace in a nearby church.

Most likely, they would be sleeping off their hangover while attending the dawn Mass.

Such indiscretions concern priests like Sid Marinay, vice

chancellor of the Archdiocese of Manila and parish priest of the Saint Maria Goretti Parish on United Nations Avenue in Manila.

"Definitely, there is grace for everyone," he told the INQUIRER yesterday. "But we should bear in mind that grace is received depending on the person's disposition."

The matter, he said, was not unlike an applicant who goes to a job interview wearing his best attire and exhibiting a positive attitude. He is more likely to get the job than an applicant who shows up in shabby clothes and a bad attitude.

How Filipinos regard the dawn Mass, a Eucharistic celebration peculiar to the Philippines and approved by the Vatican, has changed over the years, accord-

CHANGING / A8



WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Luzon will have cloudy skies with scattered rain showers. The rest of the country will experience partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rain showers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA
COMPILED BY LAW DE GUZMAN, INQUIRER RESEARCH 12/23/2006

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laos	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Lepiaz	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Puno takes driver's seat in Chacha

New initiative petition now in the hands of GMA party

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo is kicking the doors to Charter change wide open again.

After Speaker Jose de Venecia and his Lakas subordinates bungled three attempts to change the Constitution, it is now the turn of Ms Arroyo's political party Kampi, and its former chair Interior and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno, to take the driver's seat in the Charter change express.

A top local government official, who requested anonymity, said Puno and Kampi have started mobilizing governors and mayors to support the filing at the Commission on Elections of a second petition for a people's initiative to amend the Constitution in a bid to start the process by next month.

The official from a Visayas province said Puno and Kampi have decided to take the lead in the Charter change drive after Ms Arroyo made known her unwavering desire to fulfill her promise of changing the Constitution before the end of her term.

In an interview, Albay Rep. and Arroyo economic adviser Joey Salceda confirmed that plans were afoot to give the people's initiative a second crack after the first attempt was shot down by the Supreme Court two months ago.

"A second people's initiative attempt could just succeed as it draws on the SC definitive ruling on RA 6735 as an enabling law. Under the current political cli-

mate, it is the only viable mode provided that it is limited to the proposition that there shall be a unicameral Congress—period. Yes or no," said Salceda, a member of Kampi. "I am willing to bet that it would go. Thus, the attempt should be made soon early New Year."

Eastern Samar Gov. Ben Evardone had revealed that the second petition would retain the presidential system (to address the public's wish to take a direct hand in choosing the country's leaders) but with a unicameral Congress to abolish what Ms Arroyo's allies deem as an uncooperative Senate.

Evardone said this should improve the appeal of the people's initiative.

Salceda said from the start, Kampi had always advocated for a unicameral Congress in the Charter change initiative.

The original people's initiative was derided largely because of the vast powers that De Venecia and his Lakas allies had wanted to give the interim parliament and the complex proposals to be heaped on the electorate in a plebiscite.

After the legal setback in the hands of the High Court, De Venecia and Lakas pushed for a constituent assembly but this was junked due to protests from religious groups and local government officials who did not like the way this mode was being



MILITANTS lead a rally in downtown Iloilo City to protest an aborted move to convert the House of Representatives into a constituent assembly without the Senate. The Charter change train has been derailed hence, but proponents are bringing it back on track. ARNOLD ALMACEIN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

shoved down the throat of the public (by bypassing the Senate), including the plan to suspend the elections and extend the terms of elected officials.

Forced to retreat on Con-ass, De Venecia and Lakas tried to save face by going for constitutional convention but this play flopped when the Speaker imposed a 72-hour deadline for the Senate to accept this mode. The Senate immediately rebuffed the deadline considering that the House was in no position to impose its will on the Up-

per Chamber.

Evardone said that these series of missteps, that prompted some circles to note that De Venecia and Lakas were Chacha's biggest liability, led Puno and Kampi to take charge after Ms Arroyo reiterated her determination to change the Constitution.

The Commission on Elections appears to be taking the cue.

It said yesterday that it was preparing for a plebiscite just in case the second bid for an initiative succeed.

"We are now in the process of reactivating and refining Comelec Resolution No. 2300 that would govern the plebiscite," Commissioner Resurreccion Borra told reporters yesterday.

Borra was referring to the set of Comelec regulations that implemented Republic Act No. 6735, or the Initiative and Referendum Act of 1989, which the Supreme Court ruled in October to be sufficient to amend the Charter through initiative.

In a press conference, Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr.

said he did not want to think about new Chacha initiatives and plebiscites, saying nothing was concrete about these.

"I don't want to give any thoughts on that. If it comes, we'll talk about it later. Why bother about it? It's still in the air," Abalos said, adding that Comelec is focused on preparations for next year's mid-term elections.

When pressed, however, Abalos said the election body may still entertain a new initiative petition as part of its job.

Tribute for scientist 'Ochie' Baes

A TRIBUTE WILL BE HELD FOR DR. ALOYSIUS "Ochie" Baes at 7 p.m. today at his parents' home on Lopez Street, Barangay Baybayin, Los Baños, Laguna, where his remains lie.

Baes, who died on Thursday afternoon at the National Kidney Center in Quezon City, will be buried at 1 p.m. on Dec. 24 in Barangay Anos, Los Baños after a Mass at the Immaculate Conception Church in the town.

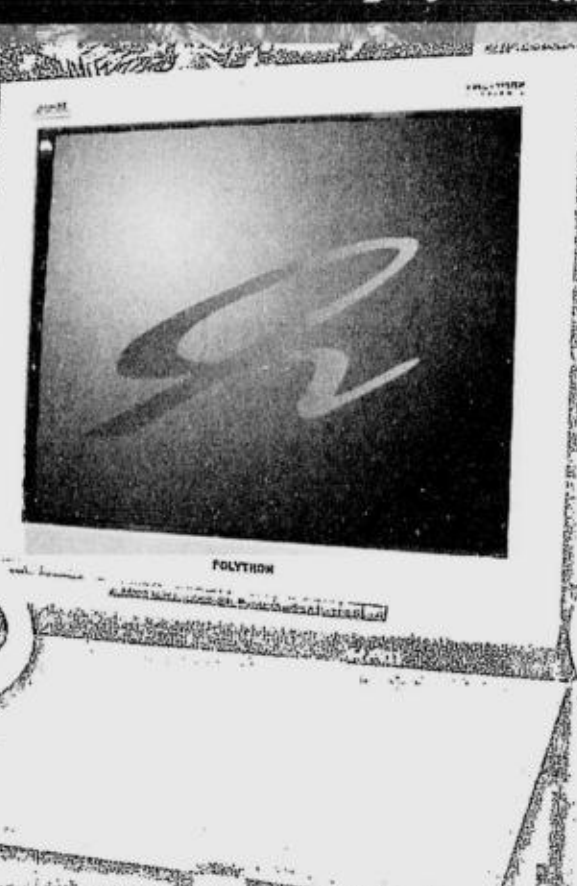
Before his death, he was the chair of the Cen-

ter of Environmental Concerns board.

He was also a former member of the Rapra-pu Fact Finding Commission that investigated allegations of environmental violations by the government's flagship mining project in Albay.

He used to teach chemistry at the University of the Philippines at Los Baños.

A political detainee during martial law, Baes composed songs about love of country that were popularized by alternative singing groups.



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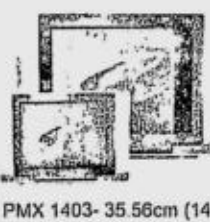
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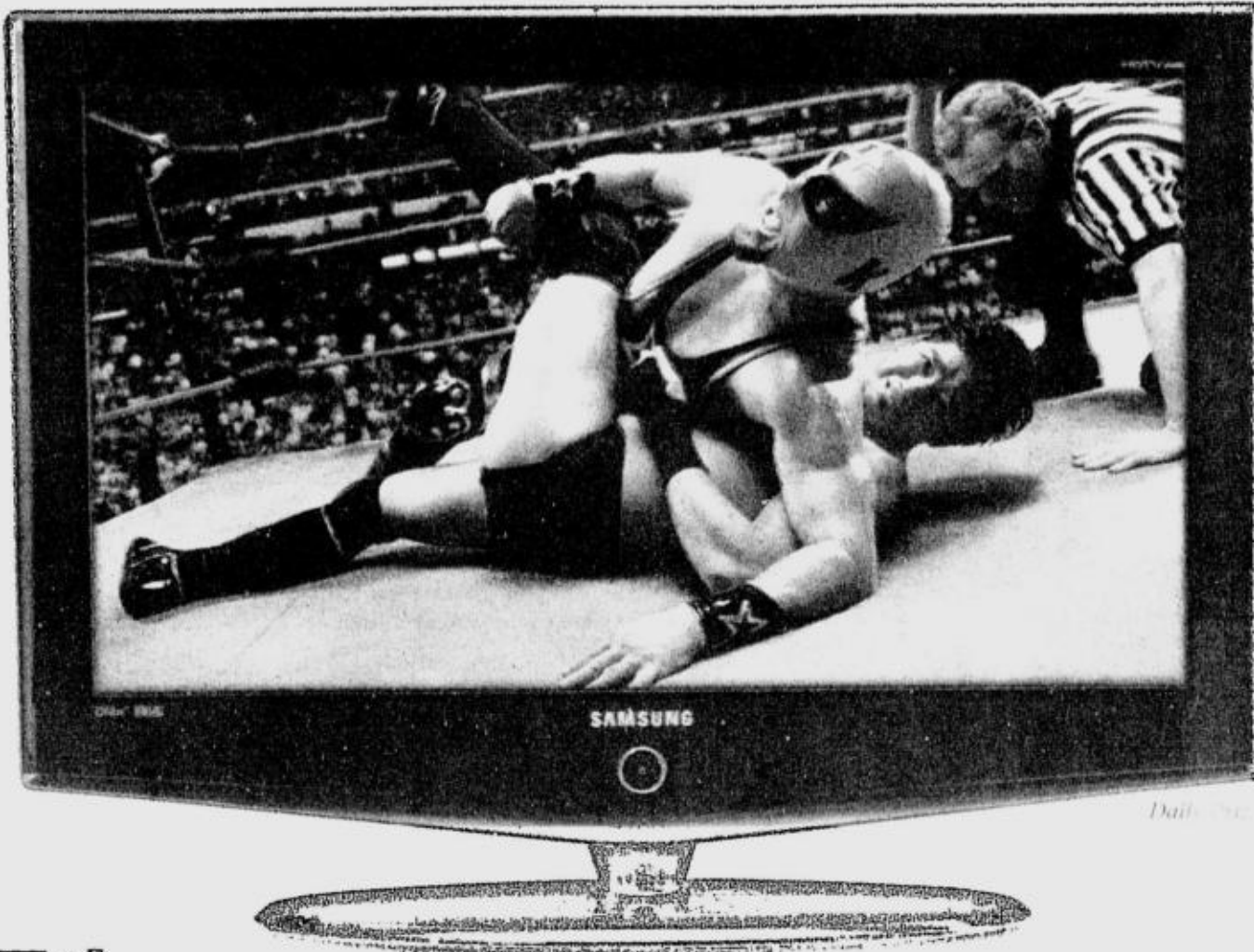


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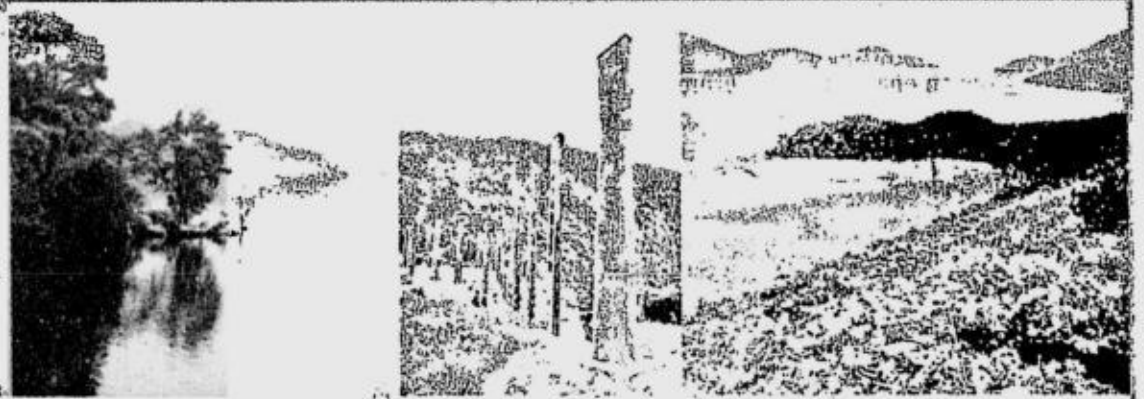
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Discover Nature and Adventure in Hong Kong

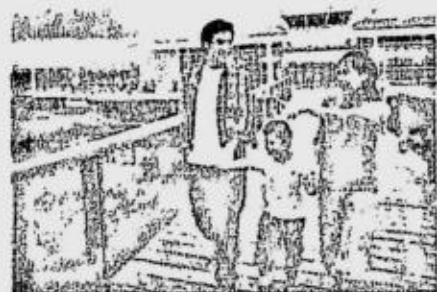


Hong Kong is a city of contrasts: East meets West, ancient heritage mixed with modern times, and interlinked cosmopolitan and green appeal. Beyond the hustle and bustle of city life that Hong Kong is known for, lies a natural asset hidden in and around the city and beyond Hong Kong's island territories. Truly a journey of discovery into the sanctuaries of natural beauty.

HONG KONG NATURE KALEIDOSCOPE

Hong Kong offers a haven for nature lovers waiting to experience the city's quite and serene destinations. To highlight these destinations, the Hong Kong Tourism Board designed the Natural Kaleidoscope Program, a set of seven outdoor activities that will highlight the territory's lesser-known eco-wonders that are sure to provide memorable experiences to nature enthusiasts. The tour offers outdoor activities for each day of the week where visitors can choose from a range of interesting green activities.

Hong Kong Wetland Park



One of the tours include a visit to the territory's latest attraction, an ecological gem in the form of the Hong Kong Wetland Park. The park is a world-class eco-tourism facility that provides education on environmental protection and wetland conservation in a fun and interactive environment. The 60-hectare Wetland Reserve offers an up close experience with some of its wildlife inhabitants, from birds to dragonflies, amphibians to reptiles. You might even chance upon some of the rare and endangered species on walks throughout the reserve.

Island Hopping

Another 'must-see' tour of the Natural Kaleidoscope Program features an island-hopping tour of the Northeast New Territories — perfect for the lover of the great outdoors! The tour features stunning landscapes, quaint rural villages and unspoiled island. An amazing contrast to the fast city life that Hong Kong has been known for. The tour takes you to some of the best-preserved green areas in Hong Kong, such as the Yan Chau Tong Marine Park, Lai Chi Wo, and the islands of Kat O and Tap Mun.

ISLANDS OF TRANQUILITY

For those wanting to explore the landscape on their own, Hong Kong's more than 260 outlying islands are easily accessible, with most of them is only a short ferry ride away from the city, and waiting for the eager discoverers.

Lamma Island

Just a half-hour ferry ride from Central is Hong Kong's third largest island — Lamma Island. The island offers a perfect escape from the city, with trails meandering along hills and coastlines, no cars and very few buildings. Bathing beaches await every traveler who seeks for a serene atmosphere and with some of Hong Kong's most popular seafood restaurants just a few walks away.

Lantau Island

Lantau is the largest outlying island in Hong Kong. Its stunning and tranquil

environment makes it a famous destination for both green enthusiasts and hikers. Although famed for the towering Giant Buddha and the Po Lin Monastery, there are plenty of natural wonders on the island for you to discover. The Lantau Peak hiking trail takes you through a range of stunning landscapes — valleys, mountains, woodlands, and also through some of the historic cultural landscape of hillside monasteries and an old fort. Don't forget to make a date with some of the island's much-loved residents — the endangered pink dolphins in their natural habitat in the waters off the island.

Cheung Chau Island

Cheung Chau, meaning "long island" in Cantonese, is one of Hong Kong's most popular of all the outlying islands. The quiet residential island is home to a picturesque waterfront that bustles with activity filled with butcher shops and vendors selling fresh fish, shellfish, fruits and vegetables, small local restaurants and food stalls. Cheung Chau is famous for its week-long Bun Festival, held either in April or May each year. The colorful Taoist festival meant to appease ghosts and spirits, features opera performances, prayers, and climaxes in a procession. The highlight of the festival is the climbing of bamboo bun-towers — during which participants would scamper up the towers and grab as many buns as possible. The buns would then

be sold or distributed to those who did not join in the competition.

CITY OASIS

Right in the heart of Hong Kong lies a pocket of lush greenery. A pleasant surprise of emerald greens, lily ponds and cool mountain air while still in the city.

The Peak Walking Trail

For a breathtaking view of the cityscape, lush greenery and the magnificent Hong Kong harbor, The Peak is the perfect place to experience incredibly beautiful vistas. Start the walk at Lugard Road, near the Peak Tower. En route to the Lugard Road Lookout are panels of information introducing the geology, climate, vegetation and insects found around the Peak.

On a fine day, the historic Pinewood Battery along Hatten Road gives visitors a panoramic view of the Tsing Ma Bridge and the outlying islands, including Lamma and Lantau islands. Continue to University Drive where you can take a bus back to Central. Alternatively, you can walk along Conduit Road for another half an hour before reaching the Central-Mid Levels Escalator — the world's longest covered escalator which takes you back to the city central.

Hong Kong Park

Right in the heart of the city is 10 hectares of lush green grounds known as the Hong Kong Park where tired shoppers and office workers often rest. Framed by the surrounding skyscrapers, the Park features a huge aviary with a suspended bridge that allows visitors close contact



with the colorful birds residing in the park.

HONG KONG'S BACK GARDENS

There is more to uncover in Hong Kong with its countless more pockets of natural landscape. Celebrate the great outdoors by taking a trip to Sai Kung, located northeast of the New Territories. Sai Kung, dubbed as the Back Garden of Hong Kong, is a mecca for lovers of water-sports, offering a gamut of activities that include wakeboarding, kayaking, a cruise around the surrounding beautiful shorelines and even squid fishing. The Sai Kung Country Park offers more than 7,500 hectares of nature's playground for hiking and camping. It is no wonder that many tourists and Hong Kong residents flock to Sai Kung for some time off far from the madding crowd, it's an endless playground of outdoor fun!

For more information on how you can have a fascinating green holiday in Hong Kong, contact a travel agent, or log on to www.DiscoverHongKong.com.



Comelec drops plan to make elections in May automated

By Jerome Aning

THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS yesterday said it was abandoning plans to test the automation of next year's elections due to insufficient time and the absence of an enabling law.

Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. said the agency's position on automation was based on the recommendation made by the commission's Advisory Council, composed of representatives from other government agencies and the private sector.

"The very strong statement of the council is that prudence dictates that we cannot or we should not automate this coming elections," Abalos said in a press conference.

The council is composed of representatives from the science and education departments, Commission on Information and Communications Technology, University of the Philippines, Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines, Philippine Computer Society, senior Comelec officials and other private consultants.

Abalos said the Council expressed the belief that it was more viable to focus on the electronic transmission of results, which requires less preparation time than the automation of the voting and counting aspects of the election.

No law

Abalos said the Automated Election Systems bill, which was passed by the Congress' bicameral conference committee, has not yet been enacted into law and that no budget has been set aside for the implementation of automation in pilot areas.

"There is still no law yet and there is no budget. How can we invite people (interested in providing automation technology) to a bidding if there's no budget?" Abalos said.

More important, Comelec needed enough time to bid out the automation project, procure the voting and counting machines, distribute and test them, train personnel and educate the

public about it, he said.

Abalos said the agency also had a hard time securing the advance approval of local government units where automation would be tested.

"I have talked to many of them. We should not take a risk. What if wrong buttons are pressed and the elections are jeopardized?" they said. So that is the consensus," Abalos said.

In anticipation of the passage of the bill, Comelec formed a committee to entertain proposals for automation systems from various information technology firms. The Advisory Council membership was even expanded and pilot areas were pre-selected, all in accordance with the bill's provisions.

Comelec also hoped that the budget would not be a problem since Congress would surely provide for it and that the needed funds would be dependent on which aspect of the election would be automated and where it would be implemented.

Abalos said Comelec hoped that lawmakers would pass the AES bill when Congress resumes session next month so that the agency could at least implement electronic transmission of results, the third aspect of the election process.

"It is very important. It is in the transmission where there is the so called substitution of election returns, hijacking of election returns. To stop all of these, so that the people would no longer attempt to hijack elections returns, we have now electronic transmitted results which could now be the basis of a canvassing. That can still be implemented," said Abalos.

Electronic transmission, he added, would be implemented in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and the province of Batanes to hasten the consolidation of results for the senatorial elections.

"This is not yet sure but we hope we could still implement it, since the electronic transmission technology is not that complicated and the candidate would quickly know if he won or lost," Abalos said.



MEMBERS of the PNP Mobile Group based in Ligao City, Albay, carry a body, one of hundreds of casualties recovered three days after Supertyphoon Reming ravaged Albay.

NINO JESUS ORBETA

Ghosts of Christmas past haunt typhoon victims

PADANG, ALBAY—SHERWIN Ballester doesn't want an iPod or a pair of flash sneakers for Christmas, all he wants is a sign from his dead father and brother.

The 15-year-old high school dropout sits silently for hours in a vast wasteland of mud where his village used to lie before Typhoon "Reming" swept it and his family away.

"Santa might grant me my wish," Ballester said, pointing to places where he used to play with his brother and cousins. "I sorely miss them. I hope they will make me feel their presence. I just want some signs."

Reming decimated Padang, a once thriving rural village at the foot of Mayon volcano after flash floods sent tons of volcanic debris onto its houses and farms last month.

Ballester lost his father Serafin, elder brother Joemar and 17 uncles, aunts and cousins in the torrent. He is one of many bereaved. Nearly 1,200 people were feared killed in the catastrophe and around 120,000 are still homeless.

While Ballester sits and waits, a handful of men dig layers of volcanic debris to salvage cooking pans, kitchenware and other valuables from their homes buried under 2-3 meter of mud, sand and boulders.

"Christmas will never be the same for us," Silangan Santander told Reuters, feeding her 2-year-old daughter at a packed school converted into temporary shelter for hundreds of displaced people from Padang. "There's nothing left for us. We lost our homes, we lost our farms, we lost our loved ones. We're not sure how long the government will feed us," she said.

Each family in Padang lost an average of four to five members. With such grief and misery, celebrating Christmas with the traditional family reunion, exchange of gifts and delicacies such as roasted pig seems wrong for those whose homes and families are still standing.

'I feel guilty celebrating when the people around me continue to suffer from the effects of the typhoon...'

While Ballester sits and waits, a handful of men dig layers of volcanic debris to salvage cooking pans, kitchenware and other valuables from their homes buried under 2-3 meter of mud, sand and boulders.

"I really can't feel Christmas," said Florian Locsin, a small hotel operator. "I feel guilty celebrating when the people around me continue to suffer from the effects of the typhoon."

Wide areas of the Bicol region are still without power and in the regional hub of Legazpi City, there were no carol singers, no decorations hanging in homes and shops and Christmas parties were cancelled.

Even radio stations were avoiding playing festive tunes. "Those who want to celebrate

Christmas go to Manila and stay with their relatives," said Joan Villanueva, a member of the local disaster agency.

While elsewhere in the country, people will be feasting on pig and rice cakes on Christmas Eve, former residents of Padang will be eating canned sardines and packs of instant noodles.

The following day, the surviving members of the Santander family will gather and hold memorial services at the place where their home used to stand.

"Our family will never be complete again, so we want to be with them in spirit during Christmas Day, a tradition we observed when we were still one big happy family," Silangan said.

On Christmas Day, Ballester will also return to what used to be his home.

"I wish Santa Claus could fulfill my wish this Christmas," he said. "I desperately want to see my father and brother again." **Reuters**

Solon denounces sale of gov't shares in PLDT

CAMARINES NORTE REP. Arnulfo Fuentebella yesterday condemned the projected sale of the controversial 115,415 shares of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) to Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Inc. and NTT DoCoMo of Japan, describing the deal as scandalous, irregular, and disadvantageous to the government.

In a statement, Fuentebella said that no honest-to-goodness public bidding took place on the sale of the PLDT shares, stressing that certain parties appeared to have manipulated the process to enable First Pacific and NTT DoCoMo to purchase those shares at a discount.

Fuentebella urged President Macapagal-Arroyo to declare a failure of public bidding, suspend the sale and call for a new bidding.

First Pacific and NTT DoCoMo were reportedly poised to match the earlier bid of Singapore-based Parallax Capital Management, which put P25.6 billion for those PLDT shares. The Supreme Court had ruled that the shares were part of the "ill-gotten wealth" of the Marcoses and forfeited these in favor of the government.

Fuentebella said the two foreign firms would be buying the PLDT shares at a 20-percent discount, when a block sale of those highly profitable shares could fetch a premium at least 20 percent over their market value.

Fuentebella said the government stood to lose between P8 billion to P17 billion from the deal.

He said he would initiate a congressional probe to unearth the complete details of the deal.

Fuentebella said he had received reports that the supposed public bidding was conducted in complete haste and secrecy, allowing only two Singapore-based investment firms to participate in the disposal of the PLDT shares.

"The lack of transparency in the bidding is already an aggravating factor that would warrant an immediate cancellation of the sale," Fuentebella said in the press statement.

"What happened was that they put a very low price for those shares, thus prompting the only two participants to put lower bids," he said. "This is grossly disadvantageous to the government, which is in need of funds to finance its national budget."

First Pacific and NTT DoCoMo would pay only P2,025 per PLDT share, when its price at the Philippine Stock Exchange is almost P2,500 per share, according to the congressman.

According to investment experts, any block sale of the PLDT shares could command a premium that could go up to 50 percent. At 20-percent premium, the government stands to lose P8 billion from the deal and at 50-percent premium, the loss could reach P17 billion.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL



Saturday, December 23, 2006
3rd Week of Advent
John of Kanty

1st Reading: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24
Gospel: Luke 1:57-66

When the time came for Elizabeth, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the merciful Lord had done a wonderful thing for her and they rejoiced with her. When on the eighth day they came to attend the circumcision of the child, they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." They said to her, "No one in your family has that name"; and they asked the father by means of signs for the name he wanted to give. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote on it, "His name is John," and they were very surprised. Immediately Zechariah could speak again and his first words were in praise of God.

A holy fear came on all in the neighborhood, and throughout the Hills of Judea the people talked about these events. All who heard of it pondered in their minds and wondered, "What will this child be?" For they understood that the hand of the Lord was with him.

Commentary

The prophet cries out that God is sending his messenger to prepare his way before us and suddenly the one we seek will be here. But can we bear his presence—a refiner's fire, carefully watched, until the gold is pure, God never taking his eye off of us. Are our hearts turning, our hearts becoming pure?

Elizabeth gives birth to her child and when he is named John, Zechariah's tongue is loosened and he begins to praise God. What child will this be? We are to go before the face of the Lord and prepare his way. What child of God have we become? Do we see how close the Child, the Son of Justice is to being revealed among us?

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Abra governor linked to congressman's murder

From page A1

to establish the governor's involvement, which now was based on hearsay evidence.

Calderon said "follow-up operations are under way to dig deeper into this case and possibly identify the other participants."

But several hours after the press conference, operatives of the PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) raided Valera's house at Emerald Hills in Zone 7 of the Bangued provincial capital shortly before 3 p.m.

When the operatives arrived armed with a search warrant issued by the Quezon City Regional Trial Court, the house had been abandoned, said CIDG-Cordillera Autonomous Region chief, Senior Supt. Eduardo Bayangos.

Whereabouts unknown

Valera has disappeared and his whereabouts are unknown.

"We have information that he is keeping high-powered firearms in his house. Based on our intelligence report, he is also holding private armies with high-pow-

ered firearms," Bayangos said. "What the operatives saw were construction workers. I think he has gone into hiding."

Policemen led by Bayangos swooped down on eight houses owned by Valera, two mayors and their allies in Bangued hours after the governor was implicated in the murder. An unlicensed rifle was taken from Valera's compound and an inventory was still being conducted at 6 p.m.

Also raided were the houses of Lacub Mayor Cesar Pe Baroña, Tineg Mayor Edwin Crisologo and five other Bangued residents.

"Valera was not around. We have no warrant [to search] his ancestral home but we know he doesn't go there anymore. Even [Bangued Mayor Maria Zita Valera, the governor's wife] did not report for work [on Friday morning]," Bayangos said.

The mayors are also missing, according to sources at the National Police Commission.

"We cannot say Valera is a fugitive yet. We can only file charges against him on Tuesday after Christmas, but we will hunt him if

he does not surface," he said.

How police broke case

Police officials said they were able to break the case with Panday's arrest on Dec. 19 at his house at 229 Jasmin St., Barangay Cembo in Makati City. His two sons were also arrested but later released.

The following day, Panday confessed to his participation and gave details about the plot.

Panday was not presented during the press conference in the PNP headquarters at Camp Crame.

The 63-year-old Panday, who works as operations manager of Atron Security and Investigation Agency, allegedly got involved in the plot to kill Bersamin on Dec. 9 when Dupo asked for his help to acquire a motorcycle that would be used in the operation.

According to a member of Task Force Bersamin, Central Police District chief Senior Supt. Magtanggol Gatdula, Panday joined Dupo's group after he was promised P100,000 once the assassination was carried out.

Quoting from Panday's sworn statement, Gatdula said it was during the second meeting between Panday and Dupo in Guadalupe, Makati, on Dec. 13 that Valera's name came up.

P5-M project

While the two were having drinks, Dupo reportedly told Panday that a politician from Abra had promised to pay his group P5 million if they were able to kill Bersamin. Dupo also told Panday that the politician had given a P500,000 down payment.

Upon Panday's insistence, Dupo revealed that the mastermind was Valera.

Gatdula said a background check showed "it was common knowledge in Abra" that Bersamin would run for governor against Valera's wife in next year's elections.

Gatdula also said Panday identified the gunman as a certain Dominador Barbosa and the driver of the getaway motorcycle as a certain Sonny Taculao.

Police yesterday filed two counts of murder and two counts

of frustrated murder against Panday, Dupo, Barbosa, Sonny Taculao and another unidentified suspect.

The Quezon City Prosecutor's Office did not recommend bail for Panday.

According to police, Panday, Dupo and the unidentified fifth suspect were on a van (Toyota Tamaraw FX) that was parked at a distance from Mt. Carmel Church. The van reportedly served as the suspects' final getaway vehicle.

Valera at wedding, too?

Gatdula said Bersamin's relatives who were interviewed by the police said Valera was present during the wedding although the governor did not have any role there.

"The governor left the church 30 minutes before the actual assassination. That is according to the brother of the victim," Gatdula said.

PNP-CIDG Director Jesus Verzosa said investigators were able to trace the suspects' identities through the ownership docu-

ments of the recovered motorcycle left by the suspects about a kilometer away from the church.

The official receipt of the purchase dated Dec. 12, 2006 showed the motorcycle was purchased from Bikewise Marketing in Marikina City for P17,000. The purchase was made in the name of a certain Louie Saulog of 229 Jasmin St., Cembo, Makati, which turned out to be Panday's address.

Police investigators found there was no such person named Louie Saulog and turned their eye on Panday instead.

They said the former sergeant cooperated by identifying the other suspects and giving details about the planning and execution of the assassination.

Panday allegedly claimed that the plot was finalized only hours before the killing, or at around 9:30 a.m. during a meeting in a fast-food restaurant branch in Guadalupe. Bersamin and his bodyguard were killed shortly before 3 p.m.

With a report from Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon



GAWAD Kalinga resettlement site for typhoon survivors in Albay.

IRENE SOLMIRANO/CONTRIBUTOR

Bayan Muna leader slain in Sorsogon

From page A1

not harmed.

The town police chief, Chief Insp. Jigo Lopez, said three gunmen in helmets attacked Bantog at around 10 a.m. at the Donsol Tourism Office, which is barely 300 meters from the headquarters of the tourist police.

Bantog was with three other BJOs when the assailants struck, Lopez said, quoting eyewitnesses.

He said the gunmen fled on Bantog's motorcycle after the shooting.

Lopez said police investigators were preparing to take the statements of three witnesses to the killing.

He said .45 cal. bullet shells had been recovered from the crime scene.

Bantog was the third militant leader killed in the province by gunmen in just two weeks.

Bantay Laya II

The other two, Cris Frivaldo and lawyer Gil Gojol, were gunned down separately in the towns of Irosin and Gubat.

In Manila, Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano said more bloodshed should be expected following President Macapagal-Arroyo's approval of the internal security master plan called "Oplan Bantay Laya II."

According to the militant party-list lawmaker, the new military counterinsurgency offensive would institutionalize retired Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan's strategy of "urban militarization."

He said Oplan Bantay Laya II would eventually bring the political killings to urban centers as part of Ms. Arroyo's goal of ending the communist insurgency by 2010, when her term ends.

"All previous campaign plans of the Armed Forces failed because they were anchored on the military mind-set to catch the fish by totally draining the water," said Mariano, a member of the House committees on national defense and on human rights, and a cofounder of the militant farmers' alliance Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

"In other words, [the strategy is] directed against civilians. Ms. Arroyo's Oplan Bantay Laya II is

bound to fail, too," he told the INQUIRER.

Death squads

Mariano said part of the urban militarization earlier introduced by Palparan in Central Luzon was the "retention of death squads" believed responsible for about 800 victims of extrajudicial killings since 2001.

In Central Luzon, Palparan experimented on bringing counterinsurgency to the urban centers, militarizing in the process the cities of San Fernando and Angeles in Pampanga, San Jose in Nueva Ecija, Tarlac in Tarlac, and Malolos in Bulacan, according to Mariano.

"Where Oplan Bantay Laya I primarily victimized the peasantry, Oplan Bantay Laya II will victimize anyone. Nobody is safe anymore," the lawmaker warned.

He cited reports from Anakpawis-National Capital Region that on Nov. 7, two platoons from the Army's 202nd Infantry Brigade were deployed in seven barangays in Pandacan, Manila.

"This is what General Esperon meant when he mentioned a 'holistic approach' [to counterin-

surgency]," Mariano said, adding:

"In the wake of heightening political killings and repression, it is high time for Congress to safeguard and uphold human rights and assess and scrutinize the Arroyo government's counterinsurgency program. We demand an all-out inquiry into the AFP's 2007-2010 internal security operation plan."

'Butcher'

Mariano issued the reminder that wherever Palparan got assigned, the number of killings involving leftist activists escalated.

As a colonel and later brigadier general, Palparan headed the Army's 204th Infantry Brigade based in Oriental Mindoro from 2001 to 2004.

He was labeled the "Butcher of Mindoro," but had repeatedly denied involvement in the killings.

Before Palparan retired in September, the human rights group Karapatan reported 326 cases of human rights violations, including about 80 killings, under his watch. *Reports from Bobby Q. Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon; Michael Lim Ubac in Manila*

AFP truce just a ploy, says Sison

From page A1

eral Christmas ceasefire in her government's campaign against communist rebels, Esperon announced.

"Suspension of offensive military operations" against the NPA, the CPP's military arm, will take effect Dec. 24-25 and Dec. 31-Jan. 1," Esperon said.

He had earlier said the military had recommended the unilateral truce as "a Yuletide gesture" and that it was not connected with any peace talks, which the rebels broke off two years ago.

Esperon said the communist guerrillas' strength had dropped to 7,100 fighters this year from 12,000 in 2002, while the number of rebel-influenced villages fell to 2,115 this year from 12,510 in 2004.

Ms Arroyo earlier this year or-

dered an intensified campaign to finish off the Maoist rebels. She backed it with the release of P1 billion for attack helicopters and other military equipment.

Last year, communist rebels broke tradition and refused to declare a Christmas holiday truce, accusing the government of an unrelenting campaign against left-wing activists.

No guarantee

Congressional leaders said the truce declared by the government did not guarantee peace during the holidays.

Rep. Isidoro Real of Zamboanga del Sur and Liberal Party Rep. Federico Sandoval II of Malabon-Navotas said that while the government move was laudable, this would make soldiers even more open to NPA attacks.

The lawmakers challenged the

NPA to reciprocate the government gesture, which they said showed Ms Arroyo's genuine desire for peace.

Real, vice chair of the House committee on good government, urged communist rebels to "cease and desist" from launching any attacks to allow a bloodless Christmas and New Year.

"We urge them not to take advantage of the unilateral ceasefire declared by government and keep their guns silent. We hope they will eventually choose to complement the truce initiated by government," he said.

Confidence-building

Real said a bilateral ceasefire would boost confidence-building on both sides which could encourage a resumption of the peace talks.

"We hope the communist in-

surgents will opt for a truce and that the ceasefire will work well during the holiday season so that both sides will be persuaded to renegotiate for the nation's sake," said Real.

Sandoval, vice chair of the committee on appropriations, said it was not yet too late for the NPA to declare a truce with government forces.

"We appeal to them to heed the people's clamor for a bilateral ceasefire this holiday season. We should all unite in the quest for peace," he said, adding that a bilateral ceasefire this Yuletide season was in order amid the nation's efforts to help victims of recent disasters and calamities.

Sandoval said an "atmosphere of peace" would enable the country to focus on and expedite the recovery plans for the victims." *Reports from Michael Lim Ubac, AP*

New houses, hope for typhoon survivors

From page A1

Hundreds of volunteers from all over the country continued to arrive to build Gawad Kalinga homes for their grief-stricken countrymen.

Volunteers

On Thursday, Philippine Military Academy (PMA) cadets, students from University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila, De La Salle, Philippine Normal University, executives from Makati, public school teachers and even Filipino immigrants from the United States—all volunteers—started to build GK houses.

They formed a line which snaked along the rolling terrain of the resettlement, passing hollow blocks and pails of water to the person next to them, all the way to the building site.

Julie Ann Lapanan, 21, a Youth for Christ volunteer, came all the way from Cavite. She said she didn't mind the heat and the mud on her clothes because she was just happy to help.

Top businessmen who personally assisted in building houses were Ramon Isberto, Smart Communications public affairs head, and Ricardo Pascua, president and chief executive officer of The Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. and trustee of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

GK houses

Also yesterday, GK awarded 20 houses to beneficiaries from Padang.

GK Executive Director Tony

Meloto told the gathering that their houses passed the Mines and Geosciences Bureau clearance—and that his group would also offer a "food for work" program.

While the beneficiaries will own their homes, they will have to work 500 hours, building homes for other people.

They cannot sell or transfer ownership of their homes.

Glen Rabonza, executive director of the Office of Civil Defense, told the gathering that the government's target was to be able to build 10,000 housing units in Bicol and Marinduque.

In Bicol, 15 communities are being built in Camarines Sur and five others in Albay. "These communities must have provisions for livelihood," Rabonza said.

More help coming

De Castro announced that he would sign a memorandum of agreement with GK whereby P5 million would be spent to build more houses.

Another P20 million in housing aid from Malacañang was on its way to help typhoon victims in Camarines Sur and Marinduque, he added.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development would also get P50 million, De Castro said.

Fr. Ben Nebres of the Ateneo, representing the private schools, said he had asked Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. chair Manuel Pangilinan to help in the rehabilitation of schools.

"PLDT and the PBSP are in the process of surveying schools and will meet with the business sector later," Nebres said.

Marinduque will rise again, says lawmaker

By Gerald Gene Querubin
Inquirer Southern Luzon

BOAC, MARINDUQUE—"BABANGON muli ang Marinduque. (Marinduque will rise again)."

This is Rep. Edmundo Reyes Jr.'s short but meaningful Christmas message to his constituents still reeling from the destruction wrought by Super typhoons "Milenyo" and "Reming."

The trials of the past four months "will end with boundless joy and fulfillment," Reyes added with optimism.

He said there were plans to provide alternative livelihood projects for coconut farmers and fishermen whose crops and catch suffered heavily in the successive typhoons.

Coconut trees were mowed down like bowling pins when successive typhoons ravaged the province. Fishing boats were crushed and broken into pieces after strong waves and winds hit the coastal areas.

"Agriculture officials will be very busy conducting livelihood and training seminars early next year for displaced farmers. We will also be giving away seeds and seedlings of short-term crops," Reyes said.

Provincial agriculture officials initially reported that there would

be no copra production next year because of the widespread destruction, which translates to P200 million in lost income for the farmers.

They also suggested the introduction of alternative agricultural products.

Fishermen whose boats needed repair or replacement, however, would be introduced to short-term crop farming.

Gov. Carmencita O. Reyes said the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council had completed its second wave of relief distribution to almost 55,000 households affected by the typhoons, while the third wave was under way.

"We would like to thank all the institutions, nongovernmental organizations, private foundations and philanthropists, who helped and contributed to our relief efforts. Your contributions meant a lot to our people," Reyes said.

Gawad Kalinga also announced that it would adopt Marinduque as one of its beneficiaries with the formal inauguration ceremonies scheduled for Dec. 27. The first GK village would be established in the coastal town of Gasan.

The NGO also committed to put up more GK villages throughout the province.

SUPREME COURT RULING

TRO on book program voided

By Armand N. Nocum

THE SUPREME COURT HAS GIVEN THE green light for the full implementation of a \$40-million government contract for the supply of World Bank-funded textbooks to public schools in the country.

In a Dec. 20 ruling, the high court threw out a lower court injunction against the government and a local firm that stopped them from pursuing the project to supply textbooks to elementary and high school students in the country.

The entire project involves \$100 million, \$40 million of which is set for the purchase of textbooks in Science, English and Social Studies.

Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 18 Judge Myra V. Garcia-Fernandez earlier issued an injunction against the government and local firm Vibal Publishing House in connection with the textbooks which are already being delivered.

"Considering the allegations contained, the issues raised and the arguments adduced in the petition, it is necessary and proper to issue the temporary restraining order..." Supreme Court Clerk of Court Ma. Luisa D. Villarama said.

A petition for review was filed at the SC to question the lower court decision.

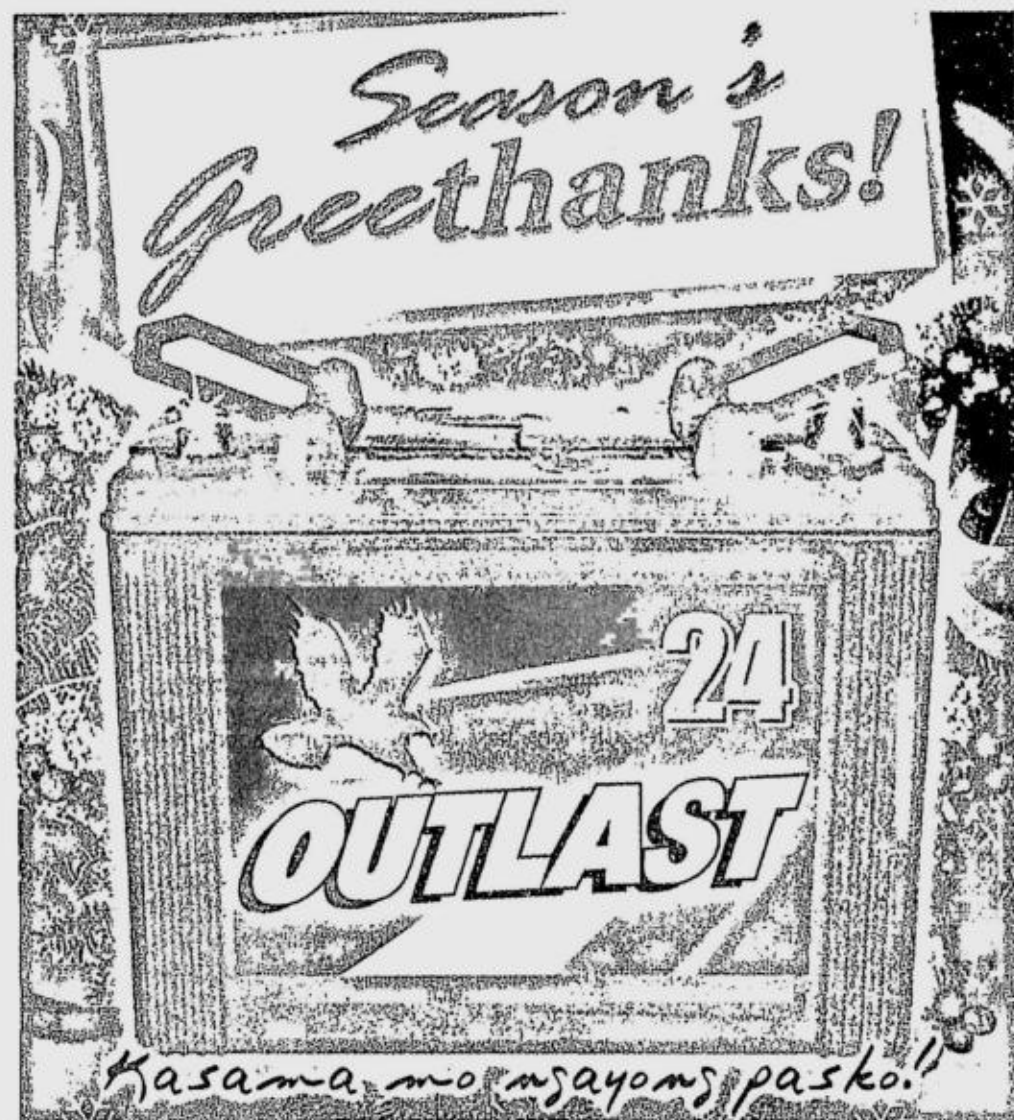
Villarama said the high court issued a temporary restraining order stopping the enforcement of Garcia-Fernandez's ruling that would be effective for 10 days.

The Office of the Solicitor General and lawyers of Vibal said Garcia-Fernandez's ruling was highly irregular since there was no hearing on the merits of the case before the ruling was issued.



CHILDREN peer out of the door of the Gogon Elementary School which was transformed into an evacuation center for victims of the mudslides and floods brought by Supertyphoon "Reming" in Albay. The lack of classrooms and textbooks was aggravated by scandals in a program to distribute textbooks in public schools under a World Bank program.

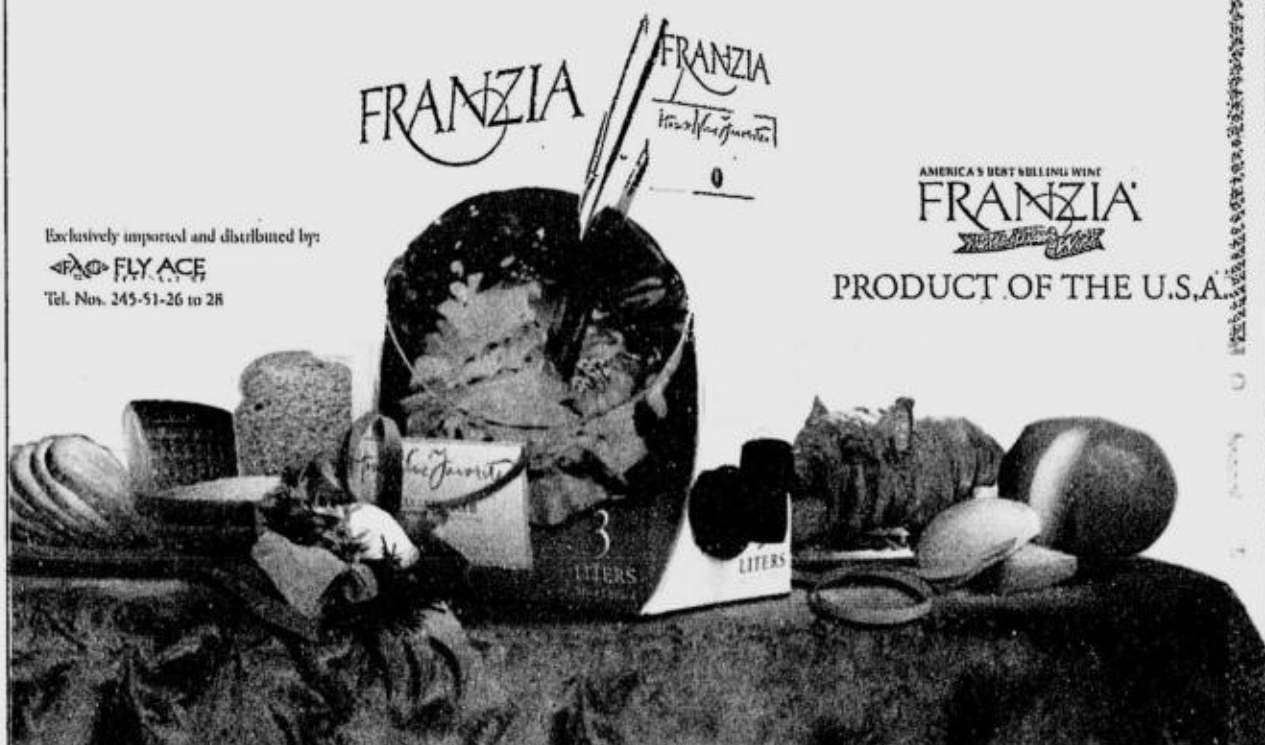
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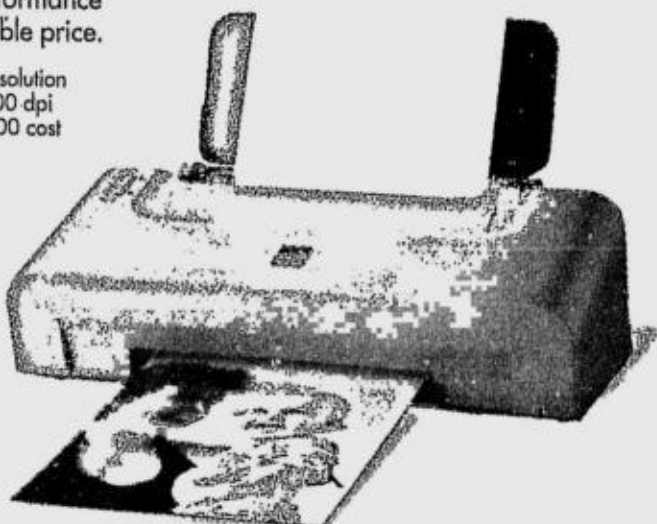
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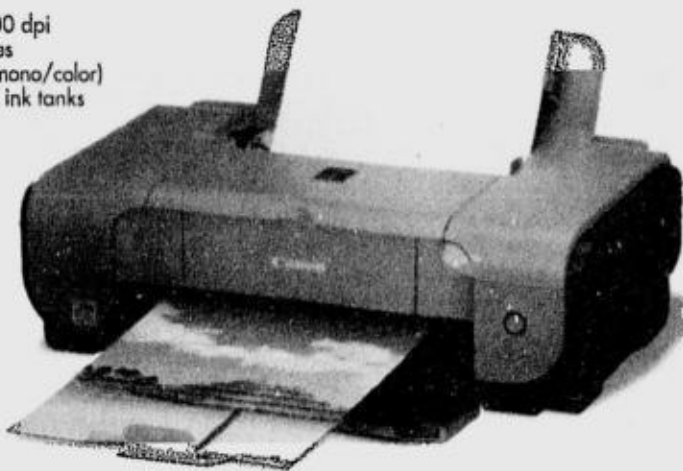


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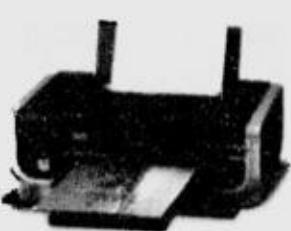
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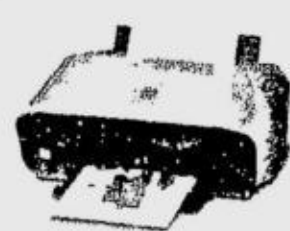
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US cancels war games with RP ...

From page A1

did to protect its soldiers.

The justice secretary quoted the governor of Albay, Fernando Gonzales, as saying that US authorities had pulled out their troops helping in typhoon-ravaged areas in Bicol.

"They are displeased with us. We have a treaty and we didn't comply," said the secretary, who had from the outset upheld Malacañang's position that custody of Smith belonged to US authorities.

Community relations

According to Lussenhop, "ongoing" community relations projects involving the US military will not be affected by the cancellation of the war games.

The US Embassy website is currently reporting on the Christmas gift-giving activities of US servicemen, some of them dressed as Santa Claus, in Manila, Zamboanga City and Jolo.

But the New York Times quoted Fallon as saying that he would also stop the aid and reconstruction programs carried out by the American military in the Philippines until he was confident that the troops' legal rights would be protected under the VFA.

Fallon also ordered the withdrawal of an aid team in the Philippines that was assessing the needs of typhoon-ravaged areas, and canceled a number of visits by American ships, the New York Times reported.

It quoted Fallon as saying that he had likewise canceled the field exercise portions of the Balikatan, which was to open in the coming weeks and involve 4,700 American and 3,000 Philippine military personnel.

(Lussenhop said the Balikatan

traditionally opened in February.)

Fallon also said smaller segments of the exercise involving computer simulations and classroom work might be allowed to proceed if the custody dispute would be resolved.

"The last thing we want is to undo all the good work that has been done between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and ourselves, but this puts me in a real dilemma because I need to guarantee the safety of our forces," the admiral was quoted as saying.

"I'm not the judge of the guilt or innocence of the individual. The issue is only one of custody. I am responsible to our people in uniform. I have to have guarantees that I can trust their safety to an international agreement," he added.

Can't blame them

In a phone interview, Justice Secretary Gonzales said he believed the pullout of the US troops in Bicol and the cancellation of the Balikatan were a precautionary measure.

US authorities want "to protect their soldiers" and "to be sure their soldiers were out of harm's way," he said, adding:

"I really can't blame them because suppose another incident happened and some people want to take advantage of it?"

Gonzales also said US authorities wanted to make sure "that what was agreed on in the treaty should be complied with."

"Probably they're holding back and restudying their options," he said.

Gonzales said the Philippine government's executive branch, especially the President, was "in between the devil and the deep blue sea"—unable to "impose on the

courts," which were "singing a different tune" on the custody issue.

Pressure

Fallon's announcement was seen as Washington's clearest sign of displeasure over Smith's continued incarceration at the Makati City Jail (MCJ), three weeks after Makati Judge Benjamin Pozon found him guilty of raping "Nicole" in a moving van at the Subic Bay Freeport on Nov. 1, 2005.

But Solicitor General Antonio Eduardo Nachura said he did not think the cancellation of the war games would push through "because, after all, the Philippines had been exerting efforts" to have Smith returned to US custody.

"We shouldn't be faulted for what has been happening so far," he said in a separate phone interview.

Asked whether he thought it was some form of pressure, Nachura said: "In a sense, they are pressuring us to comply with the terms of the VFA."

He said both the United States and the DFA were interpreting the VFA provision on custody "along the same lines," but that the matter was now in the courts.

"We have to go through the judicial process," he said.

On shore leave

Smith and his three coaccused Marines participated in the war games last year and were on shore leave when the rape took place. All four soldiers were ordered to attend every hearing in Pozon's court but remained in the custody of the US Embassy throughout their 4-month marathon trial.

All four said consensual sex between Smith and Nicole, and not rape, had occurred.

The three other accused were

acquitted of the crime and shipped out by US authorities hours after the verdict was handed down. Smith faces up to 40 years in prison.

Upholding Philippine sovereignty in his interpretation of the VFA, Pozon later also rejected the soldier's request that he be returned to US custody while his conviction was on appeal.

The judge disregarded the position of the Department of Justice and the DFA, which both said Smith should be returned to US custody for now per the Philippines' "treaty obligations."

In appellate court

Last week, warning of serious effects on RP-US relations, the DFA formally filed a motion backing Smith's petition at the Court of Appeals seeking the nullification of Pozon's order committing him to the MCJ.

Nicole also filed a motion opposing Smith's petition, and argued that the points he had raised concerning the VFA were questions of law that were for the Supreme Court, and not the appellate court, to address.

But on Tuesday, the appellate court's 11th Division deferred ruling on the matter, citing the need for a full deliberation to determine the regularity of the Pozon order.

The appellate court's position ensured Smith's continued stay at the MCJ during the holidays.

In an earlier statement, the US Embassy called Pozon's ruling on the custody issue "a reflection of a misunderstanding of the nature of Philippine obligations under the VFA during judicial proceedings."

US Ambassador Kristie Kenney had also remarked in a dzMM radio interview that "Washington

Malacañang chided for pro-US stand

FORMER VICE PRESIDENT Teofisto Guingona said the Philippines had the right to maintain custody of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, and chided the executive branch for concurring with the US position on the issue.

In a statement titled "Justice for Nicole," the former Vice President and foreign secretary said Smith should stay under Philippine custody pursuant to provisions of the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement—the same document that the soldier had invoked in contesting before the courts his continued incarceration at the Makati City Jail.

Guingona, part of the team of private prosecutors that defended "Nicole," said Smith should stay in a Philippine jail because "his offense was done on Philippine soil against a Filipino national," and he was "off-duty, not engaged in VFA exercises, when the deed was done."

"The US government could

not have asked our government to waive jurisdiction so that they could try and punish him as they saw fit. But we could have refused because this is an extraordinary case of particular importance not only to Nicole but to the honor of the nation itself," Guingona said.

"Had we done so from the very start, then the totality of jurisdiction could have been settled from the beginning. More than that, it could have generated better goodwill between two nations over a lasting bond of over a hundred years since the turn of the twentieth century," he added.

Smith is the first US serviceman to be convicted of a major crime in the Philippines since the Philippine Senate ratified the VFA as a treaty in May 1999.

He is currently the only convict at the Makati jail, a holding facility for crime suspects still facing trial. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

was disappointed because it (Smith's detention at the MCJ) wasn't consistent with the VFA."

"The [VFA] calls for Smith to remain in US custody until the determination of the case and of all the judicial proceedings. That is defined through the completion of an appeals process," she added.

Reliance

Early this week, the DFA and Kenney signed a manifestation of the desire of the Philippine and US governments to have Smith returned to US custody.

Manila is reliant on US military aid and advice to help fight Moro insurgents and, in addition to the an-

nual war games, has up to 300 US military advisers working with local troops to help them ensnare secessionist militants in the restive South.

The annual Balikatan war games are the centerpiece of Washington and Manila's close security alliance and usually involve up to 5,000 US soldiers and around 3,000 Filipino troops over a two-week period.

The war games, which this year took place from Feb. 20 to March 5, consist of command post exercises, field and cross-training activities, live-fire drills and humanitarian and civil assistance such as road repairs and engineering works. *With a Reuters report*



THE NATIONAL Artist (center, standing) with members of the Ramon Obusan Dance Troupe. INQUIRER PHOTO

Obusan preserved folk dance forms

From page A1

tions reared in information technology.

"The sudden demise of National Artist for Dance Ramon Obusan saddens us because he was a pillar of Philippine traditional dance. Ramon has worked very closely with us on many dance projects in the past and his death will create a void in Philippine dance. We join the countless young folk dancers, teachers and researchers he trained and worked with in mourning his passing away," said Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) president Nestor O. Jardin, himself a dancer.

Josie Guillen, head of the CCP Dance Division, said: "Ramon Obusan was a man and an artist of the masses. Everything he did was for the Filipino."

Obusan followed the research tradition pioneered by fellow National Artist for Dance Francisca Reyes-Aquino who scoured the archipelago and took notes of the rich and diverse native dance traditions.

But while Aquino utilized photos for her documentation, Obusan used moving photographs and later, electronic or digital video.

He also committed the music of the folk dances on electronic, so that there are now a rich series of compact discs of the music archives of the folk dances.

Obusan's documentation was therefore more dynamic and per-

haps more useful for scholars and choreographers who would like to use the dance motifs for their artistic work.

Many hats

Obusan wore many hats. He was not only a researcher but also a teacher, choreographer, archivist, filmmaker and cultural impresario.

He began his career as an instrumentalist and dancer of the Bayanihan, the Filipino folk dance company.

In 1972, he founded the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group, which presented the traditional Filipino dances he had documented from his researches.

In having the archived dances performed on stage, Obusan sought to further ensure their longevity inasmuch as a dance committed to the research books might be neglected and forgotten if they were not put into practice by regular performances.

On his movies, Obusan would invariably be seen not only documenting the dances but also performing them with local folk, hoping to recapture for himself the native dance moves and motifs, the better for him to revive or update them in his choreographies.

Like Aquino, Obusan stood for unadulterated folk dance forms. He wanted dancers and dance companies to respect native dance traditions while acknowledging they could be updated.

In this, he took the attitude of Aquino, who had said that the

biggest threat to native dances was not extinction, but "distortion."

While Aquino did not object to "innovations" in order to update dance forms, she insisted that the original should be preserved. Folk dances, she said, should "be left as they are—of the folk."

Organic integrity

Perhaps more than Aquino, Obusan left something to ensure that the organic integrity of Filipino folk dances would be maintained. Through the Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG), performances of folk dances that are authentic and faithful to the original would be ensured.

The ROFG is a resident company of the CCP.

In fact, up to the time he was hospitalized, Obusan was overseeing "Vamos A Belen," the annual Christmas program of the ROFG at the CCP.

Obusan was also in the midst of preparations for a dance presentation for the state dinner to be hosted by President Macapagal-Arroyo during the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit next month.

When she conferred the national artist award on Obusan early this year, Ms Arroyo said "the work and achievements of Ramon A. Obusan in the field of dance are reflective of this pre-eminent excellence, and of the national genius that contributes to the artistic heritage of the Philippines and the world."

Changing Pinoy view on dawn Mass noted

From page A1

ing to Marínay.

Today, it is common to see teenagers attending the early morning Mass ostensibly for courtship or for reasons other than receiving Jesus Christ. This is apparent with their attention focused on their companions rather than on the liturgy.

Vanishing veils

When Marínay was told about the advertisement by the Calocan strip joint, he realized the situation was serious, especially since such clubs close shortly before Catholics flock to dawn Mass.

There was a time when Filipino Catholics showed deeper respect for and an understanding of the Mass and the Filipino variation of the *simbang gabi*, he said.

"You could see it in the way they dressed and conducted themselves in church," Marínay said in Filipino. "They were very disciplined in their faith."

2007 a turbulent year, say feng shui ...

From page A1

mancy, or natural energies, see a turbulent year ahead for both markets and mankind.

"The elements—they are in conflict," says Raymond Lo, a practitioner for more than 10 years, whose office is close to Hong Kong's Victoria Harbor and is considered a repository of positive feng shui energies in this hotbed of capitalism.

"Because it's fire and water, and they're not in harmony. So therefore next year in January, it's not so peaceful," Lo adds.

He expects a stock market boom in the first half of the year, with Hong Kong's Hang Seng index likely to soar over 20,000 points, creating an "illusion of optimism" before a steep drop. The market is up 30 percent this year at 19,216 and, along with other Asian stock exchanges, struck record highs in 2006.

Hard data on the accuracy of feng shui forecasts and their performance against analyst predictions is hard to come by, but Hong Kongers devour books by the city's celebrity feng shui masters.

"I believe in it a lot," says retail investor Monica Tam, who reckons that in auspicious periods she can buy stocks "with her eyes closed" and still make money.

These days, only old-timers, the pious and the old rich wear the traditional veil. Most churchgoers come in slippers, plunging necklines or "short" shorts, he added.

Mall or Mass?

During one Sunday Mass in a middle-class subdivision along Commonwealth Avenue, the INQUIRER chanced upon a popular singer-actress wearing a hipster (*sando* tank top) emphasizing her curves.

"You can't tell anymore who's going to the mall, the market (*palengke*) or to church," Marínay lamented.

If it's any consolation, Marínay's 300-capacity Maria Goretti Parish has been consistently filled since the traditional dawn Masses started on Dec. 16.

He said the same was true in the "anticipated" dawn Mass scheduled for the night before at 8 p.m.

Marínay said the "anticipated" *simbang gabi* was common in urban areas like Cebu and Metro

Manila to accommodate lifestyle wherein people go home as late as 4 a.m. the following day.

Before attending parties, which usually start at around 10 p.m., people are given the opportunity to attend dawn Mass with the anticipated schedule usually at 8 p.m.

Preserving tradition

"Before, the anticipated *simbang gabi* was unthinkable," he said. "Part of its beauty was the need to wake up early, join your community in prayer, in a cool and quiet atmosphere."

Despite the accommodation allowed by the anticipated dawn Mass, Marínay was hoping that Filipinos would still go for the regular schedule of the *simbang gabi*, both as a devotion and a way of showing respect to tradition.

"We are trying to perpetuate a tradition here and the dawn Mass is our link to the past," he said.

This is also how Christ is welcomed in this part of the world.

"Before I didn't, but with each year's experience and by seeing feng shui masters, I changed my mind," she says.

Oil and fire

Another feng shui master, Edwin Ma Lai-wah, says investors should focus on stocks harnessing the elemental force of fire, and avoid those vulnerable to it.

Oil, given its combustible nature, will be a gainer. Construction and property firms are also in favor.

"Oil prices will rise at least 5 percent, because the fire will be fierce, and other sectors related to fire will also rise," Ma says.

Metals, such as gold, steel and zinc, top performers this year, could be tempered in 2007.

"The fire will dominate them," he says, along with sectors related to gold, such as financial and banking stocks.

Wood is good

Fire is the 2007 force for feng shui master Lai Hon-fai as well, but he says wood will moderate the destructive effects.

"The wood element will have a secret effect on the fire by adding prosperity. So on the surface things might not be as good as this year, but there'll still be relatively normal growth," Lai says.

He says the US benchmark Dow Jones industrial average may drop by 5 percent, with most volatility likely in May and November.

Years ending with the number seven have a track record of stock market disaster, Lo warns, referring to the 1987 Wall Street crash and the Asian financial crisis that struck a decade later.

"You have to be very careful. The worst could be October ... but it won't be as bad as 1997," he says.

On the political front, Lo expects strife in the Western world, but few flash points in Asia.

Year of evolution

"There will be turbulence, there will be fights, there will be explosions and clashes. It's also a year of evolution," Lai predicts.

"Asia is comparatively stable, the bad energy is in the North next year, so therefore America and those (Western) countries will more easily have natural disasters and other problems."

Lai also believes a "sick" energy might arise.

"Something we have to be careful of is sickness and health problems. Epidemics could come. We have to worry about avian flu, that kind of thing," he says.

Reuters

Senate takes pride in passing 45 bills

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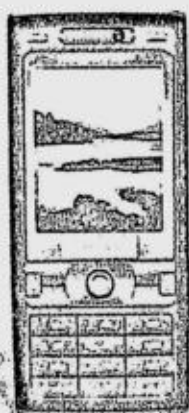
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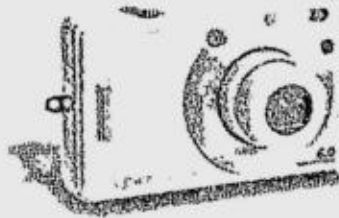
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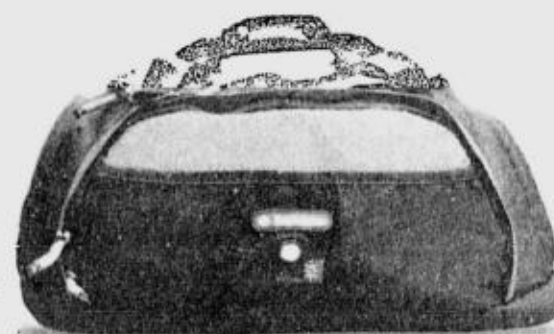
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Fighting over money

IT SEEMS THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S first trillion-peso budget is only one contentious provision away from reality. But the way Malacañang has framed the debate on the controversial food-for-schools program, the last step is turning into an unbridgeable abyss.

The bicameral conference committee has reconciled the many conflicts between the Senate and the House versions of the proposed General Appropriations Act for 2007, agreeing by and large on a record-setting budget amounting to P1.126 trillion. Only the P4.7-billion elementary-school feeding program stands in the way.

Senate President Manuel Villar, who as a reelectionist can reasonably claim some credit for the program if the provision is passed, was both vague and to the point. "The senators have suspicions that this might just be another source of scam because this involves a big amount." Other provisions in the proposed budget involve much bigger amounts, but they have not attracted attention and censure. The difference is, and as other senators have suggested, they see the food-for-schools program as being rankly political in nature, as a transparent attempt to court votes ahead of the May elections.

To his credit, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita has not sought to avoid the issue of partisanship. Last Wednesday, he addressed it head-on. Saying the anti-malnutrition initiative was a "major program" of the Arroyo administration, Ermita expressed the hope that senators—who have fought a war of attrition with Malacañang since the "Hello, Garci" scandal erupted last year—"were not clouded" by suspicions that the program funds would be used as part of next year's campaign. He then offered an unconvincing argument: "in all sincerity," he said, the money would not be used for the elections.

The problem, of course, is that sincerity cannot be legislated into existence; it is the one resource the Arroyo administration, despite an overwhelming majority in the House, is perceived to have run out of.

It is important to realize that the proposed bicameral committee compromise is not to remove the money for the feeding program, but to realign it. That is to say, the money stays in the budget, but it will be used to fund the construction of some 8,000 classrooms and the recruitment of some 6,000 new teachers.

But the Malacañang position is all or nothing. "The budget is a key component of economic takeoff and we remain confident that Congress will reach a timely consensus to push our common vision forward," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said, by way of explaining the Palace stand that the food-for-schools program must be retained in its entirety. Ermita said "there must be a way" of agreeing on the final budget without removing the funds for the program.

But despite the seeming geniality of their statements, the Palace officials and their allies in Congress left no doubt about their real position. Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, the House appropriations committee chair who advises the President on economic matters, upped the ante by all but throwing in the towel. The chance to pass the new budget was "wala na" or all gone, he said. The implication, like a revealed check, was a potent threat. The prospect of yet another reenacted budget means that Malacañang will even have more unprogrammed funds at its disposal next year.

But surely there is a way around the impasse. Here's one possibility: The Department of Education needs an additional P3 billion to construct or repair classrooms in the Bicol provinces devastated by the recent rash of typhoons. Why not realign the funds for the feeding program to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Bicol's severely damaged schools—and apportion what's left, some P1.7 billion, for a reduced version of the food-for-schools program?

That, or some similar reasonable compromise, might just work. If, that is, the cloud of politics does not in fact loom over the country's elementary schools.

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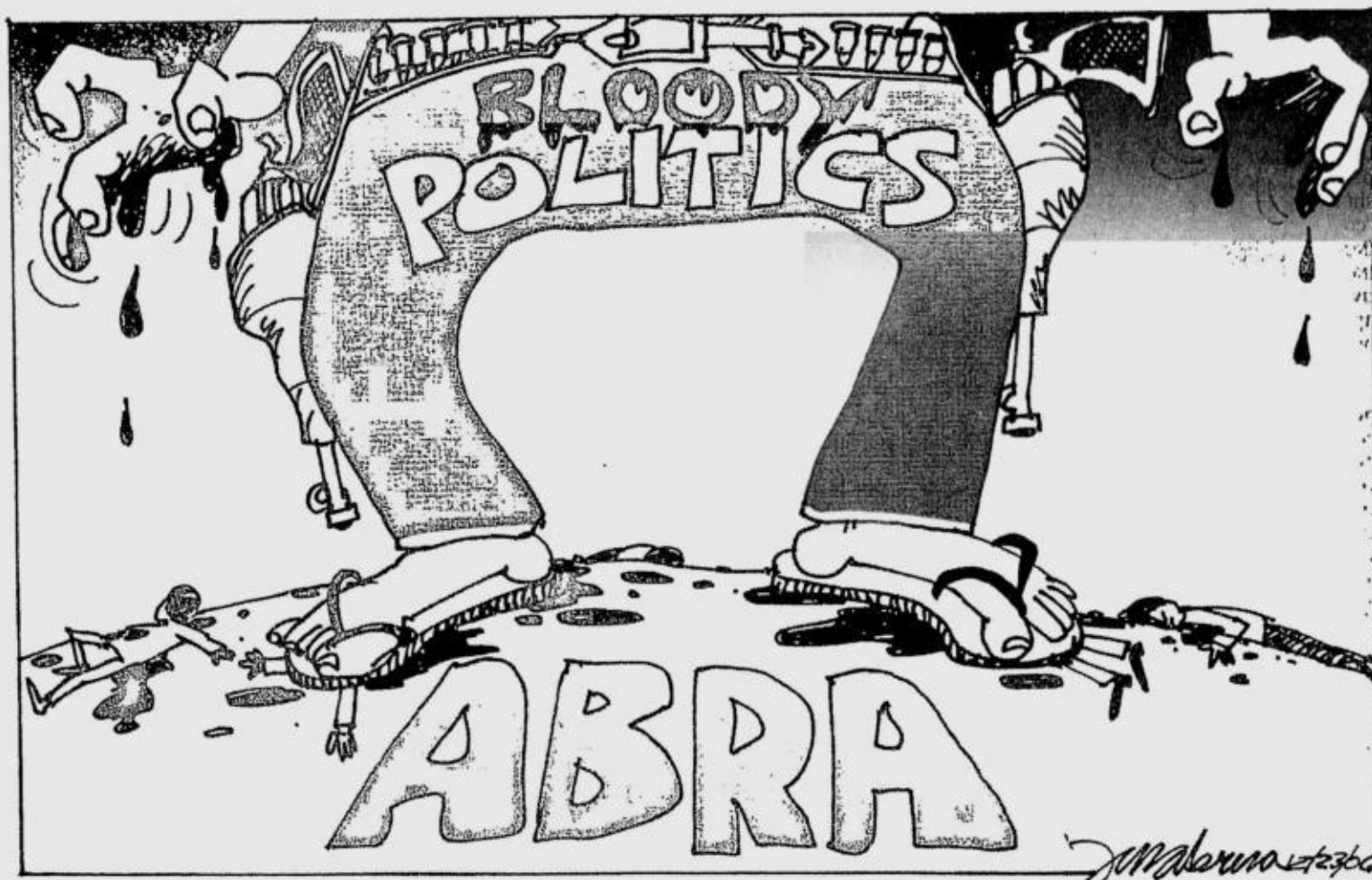
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Waiting for Christmas

SEPARATE OPINION

Isagani A. Cruz



DURING THE YULETIDE, IT IS CUSTOMARY for the belligerents in an armed conflict to declare a truce or a cease-fire in keeping with the spirit of the season. This practice is sometimes followed even if the enemies are not of the same Christian faith because of the healing message of Bethlehem for peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

During only a cold war, the need to suspend verbal hostilities is observed in the United Nations where the regular session of the General Assembly is adjourned for the Christmas recess although it is not so called to avoid complaints of discrimination against other religions. Diplomatic wranglings are put on hold so the delegates can return to their respective countries and join in the commemoration of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Non-Christians forget their allegiance to their particular deities, not to renounce them but only to share in the happy celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. This feast is not for his devotees only. Although other worshippers have their own holidays for their separate beliefs, it is during the Yuletide of the Christian world that the celebration of our God becomes universal.

I was in Tokyo once in December and was amused to see the people crowding on the Ginza all agog doing their shopping for Christmas gifts. There were signs all around announcing sales for the religious holiday not of the Japanese people but of strangers in far-off foreign lands. The sales were not for religious but only social reasons for the uncommitted shoppers.

It must be so in many non-Christian countries where a brisk business is manipulated by the money-makers for their own mercenary purposes. The shoppers have more be-

nign motives inspired by love, affection or gratitude. Toys are for children everywhere and every time, especially Christmas. Sweethearts and friends remember each other because Christmas means giving and receiving and a renewal of tender ties. Even casual acquaintances like postmen, manicurists, and newsboys too, earn collateral remembrance for their minor services or small favors.

How is it with us here in the Philippines? Yesterday, Congress temporarily adjourned and suspended all the usual quarreling and plotting and name-calling, besides plundering the taxpayers' till, that have made it the most despised institution in our government. The legislators have, by leaving the Robbers' Roost if only for a welcome while, immunized themselves from the public contempt they richly deserve. Until they resume their odiousness next January, there will be peace and quiet in that noisy front.

President Macapagal-Arroyo had earlier abandoned her allies in the lower House and has for the nonce sanitized her dingy record as our most unpopular President save only for the tyrant Marcos. The nation cannot forget the scandals of her regime like the Garci tapes and the fertilizer fund misuse. But with Christmas just around the corner, she can expect—or at least hope for—a charitable reprieve from the people's indignation.

The Supreme Court, praised for its several

decisions against GMA, has nevertheless been attacked by the defeated Con-ass cohorts and was recently called "a bunch of idiots" by a senator. Unprovoked, the justices have in effect issued a temporary restraining order against any disturbance of judicial serenity during their own rest period. Dissenting opinions against them will have to wait like the cases long pending in their dockets until they meet again after the Yuletide.

All this because Christmas is in the air and calls for a halt or at least a moderation of misunderstanding and selfishness and rancor. These should be replaced, following the admonition of the season, with kindness and good cheer for all despite their differences in status, reverence and politics. We are not all fellow Christians only celebrating the birth of our Lord, but we are all fellow human beings living under a merciful and impartial Heaven.

The only flaw in this picture is the fractious attitude of the godless NPAs and the terrorists who continue to defy lessons of the spirit repentant sinners like us share and try to obey. These miscreants are not part of the vision kept alive by the loveliest feast of Christendom that began one silent night in a lowly manger.

Two days from now it will be Christmas. Today has its own special attraction and importance because it is the time to suddenly remember omitted greeting cards that should be mailed, neglected gifts that should be given, forgotten friendships that should be revived, estranged relations that should be reconciled, hurt sensibilities that should be soothed, and other fascinations that should be cherished. Do them now.

Have a merry and peaceful Christmas on Monday!

A question of innocence or guilt

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod



Unfortunately,

Everything considered, then, it is unlikely that there is indeed a popular clamor for the release of Erap Estrada.

Is this attitude contrary to the spirit of the season? Is it uncharitable, unforgiving or lacking in compassion? Does it show reluctance to "put an end to the raging climate of hate engulfing the country" or to "unify the nation" not to want Estrada released? Before judging, let us review the facts of the case.

There are several cases filed against Estrada with the Sandiganbayan (Case Nos. 26558 to 26565), but the reason he is in jail is that one of the charges (26558) against him is plunder. Plunder is large-scale graft and corruption, and is defined under RA 7080 as "the accumulation by a public officer, in connivance with family members or other persons, of ill-gotten wealth." According to this law, ill-gotten wealth in the amount of at least P50 million is punishable by reclusion perpetua (life sentence), the death penalty having been abolished. Most importantly, it is a non-bailable offense.

The specific charge is that he took advantage of his official position, authority, relationship, connection or influence to willfully, unlawfully and critically amass ill-gotten wealth amounting to four billion, ninety-seven million, eight hundred four thousand, one hundred seventy-three pesos and seventeen centavos (P4,097,804,173.17). That is more than 80 times the amount for which life imprisonment will be exacted if guilt is established. And the Sandiganbayan judged that the evidence

presented at the outset was strong, hence the denial of bail.

The trial of Mr. Estrada has been going on for more than five years. And why is it taking so long? The delays were, it should be emphasized, mostly caused by Estrada's defense team: boycott of the first day of trial, objections to the trial hearings taking place three times a week, Estrada "firing" his lawyers, his refusal to accept court-appointed lawyers—name it. As lawyer Teddy Te puts it, these tactics are what has denied the public a clear-cut resolution to the cases and closure to this chapter in our history.

Let us summarize: (1) The reason that Mr. Estrada is in jail is that he has been charged with a non-bailable offense, and the evidence of his guilt is considered strong. (2) The reason Mr. Estrada has been in jail this long is because of delays caused by his side.

One who is responsible for delays in the resolution of a matter, and at the same time complains about the inconvenience that these delays cause, does not deserve sympathy. In the same way that a child who has killed his parents and then begs for the mercy of the court on the ground that he is an orphan will not or should not get any sympathy.

In the final analysis, there can be no reconciliation without justice, no pardon without repentance. In the final analysis, the same rule must apply whether one is a former president or one is a homeless person. This is what the Filipino people are slowly beginning to realize, from bitter experience. What we desperately want to have is a situation where the rule of law prevails, not the rule of (powerful) men. Which is why whether we personally like Joseph Estrada or not (by the way, I have always found him to be most charming and likeable) is immaterial. It is his guilt or innocence before the law that counts. Pleas for mercy or compassion or unity merely obfuscate the issue. That should come after, not before, the issue is resolved.

Responsibility

POLITICAL
TIDBITSBelinda
Olivares-Cunanan

columnist in that manner.

SOME COLUMNISTS AND WRITERS IN THE INQUIRER and outside have commented on the episode wherein business columnist Victor Agustin doused activist Renato Constantino Jr. with water "to cool him down," after the activist gate-crashed a House press conference two weeks ago. After his suspension by a three-member committee, I immediately registered my protest with the INQUIRER ombudsman, and later with its two other members. I felt it would have sufficed for the INQUIRER to say, if it wanted to, that it doesn't condone his behavior, but to suspend Agustin was to go overboard, especially since the criterion used was that he displayed "conduct unbecoming of a representative of the INQUIRER." That criterion is a quagmire, and if the INQUIRER is not to be accused of being selective—*na hindi pinag-iinitan si Agustin*—it should apply it to many other instances of "conduct unbecoming" within the paper.

Columnists are subject to the INQUIRER's supervision in the space allotted to us, and in the contract we sign, we agree that it may withhold publication if in its judgment we contravene certain standards set. But to suspend a columnist for dousing water on an "overheated" activist is to treat him like a child—like sending him to a dunce corner. I maintain that Agustin, like all of us columnists, ought to be entirely responsible for his actions, which could include having to face charges filed against him by his protagonist. The public could censure him and that's his lookout.

Some readers have pointed out that the INQUIRER is one of the most liberal and racist publications today, with its sensationalized and slanted treatment of some news. Some diplomats have noted that it has allowed unabated torrents of vociferous verbal attacks on government officials from some of its columnists, to a degree and manner not tolerated in serious publications in the more developed countries. Which is why they found it so incongruous that it would suddenly turn very conservative and lower the boom on a

Last Dec. 14, my husband and I enjoyed a welcome respite from political woes at a gala Christmas concert titled "Adeste Fideles" at Santuario de San Antonio Church in Forbes Park, Makati City. The elegant baroque setting bedecked with Christmas decorations helped put everyone in the proper Yuletide mood. It featured some of our best musical talents, among them US-based baritone Otoniel Gonzaga, German-trained tenor Frankie Asiniero, sopranos Camille Lopez-Molina, Rachelle Gero-dias and Karla Gutierrez, McDonald's top exec and tenor George Yang, organist Alejandro Consolacion II and the 50-piece Manila Philharmonic Orchestra under Rodel Colmenar. The soloists interacted excellently with various choirs. But what moved the audience most was that the selections were the best-loved traditional Christmas carols, familiar to various generations. Proceeds of the concert were donated to four parishes in the typhoon-ravaged areas in Region 5. Congratulations to the organizers, the Management Association of the Philippines, led by its president Evelyn Singson, Santuario de San Antonio and Credit Suisse.

While that event was filled with pure Christmas joy, last Wednesday was excruciating for me because of something I and the board of Alay sa Kawal (ASK) Foundation, headed by Ramon Pedrosa, had to undergo. At the ASK office in Camp Aguinaldo, we turned over checks to 14 widows or parents of soldiers killed in action and to nine soldiers permanently discharged due to serious

injuries sustained in recent combat with the New People's Army in various areas. An AFP official read the circumstances of the soldier's death or injury while trustee Lita Logarta read the circumstances of his family. We noted that many of the widows were in their early or late 20s and with just a high school education or two years in college. Many of them had several young children, and now the burden of rearing them would be entirely theirs. They wept as they came forward to receive their checks.

ASK was founded by a group of professionals 20 years ago as a response to President Corason Aquino's challenge to foster closer ties between the civilians and the reformed military after Edsa I. Established in August 1987, ASK is the oldest NGO assisting widows and orphans of slain ordinary soldiers. Over the last 19 years, it has given financial assistance to almost 4,000 widows, amounting to almost P28 million, and to 290 soldiers permanently discharged due to injuries, amounting to P1.3 million.

ASK raises funds mainly from the private sector, although the government has helped in various ways. For instance, President Macapagal-Arroyo authorized a seed money of P5 million for ASK's "Doktor para sa Kawal," a brainchild of Dr. Roberta Carreon-Romero, one of its trustees. In this program, ASK funds the studies of medical students who, after graduation, are pledged to enlist as doctors in the service of the AFP First Gentleman Mike Arroyo also donated in the past to ASK.

With the high casualties in recent years, however, ASK's funds have been severely drained, and it has become evident to the board that either we seek help or we fold up. Affected soldiers' families have asked us to continue, as the P30,000 we give them helps tide them over while their meager pensions are being processed. With this thought and in the spirit of Christmas, we at ASK would like to appeal for donations. Send your tax-exempt donations to Alay sa Kawal Foundation Inc., Account No. 324-414-2479, MetroBank Farmers' Plaza branch.

Reads for the season

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

ducted annually by the Insular Life Assurance Co. and the Philippine Jaycee Senate.

While other awards-giving bodies honor young Filipinos (below 40 years old) who have managed to win honors for themselves and serve their country at a young age, Tofil pays homage to older Filipinos: those over 50 years of age, "diligently toiling at their life's passion, seeking nothing else but to make a difference in the lives of others."

Some of the personalities profiled are well-known and have received numerous honors. Others worked in obscurity before Tofil found them and honored them for their contributions to society. But even for recognized figures, the stories told in "Common Threads" offer interesting insights into their motivations and passions.

There is the write-up on the late stage personality Zeneida Amador, which focuses on an incident in her childhood—the shooting of her father in their home when she was 12 years old—and how his death taught her a major lesson, which was, as writer Lakambini Sitoy put it: "her true life would be the life of the imagination from now on."

An Mercado-Alcantara, who edited this selection of profiles, notes that while "the achievements of the Tofil awardees have been applauded and widely recognized... the roots of their heroism—the ordinary life that was the launching pad of their greatness—are not as often told." This then is the edge the book enjoys: the glimpse into the seed of greatness planted in a young life, proving that even the most humble of existences hold the promise of something greater.

NEW YORK, in the eyes of a Filipina expatriate,

comes alive in "Surreality," a collection of essays by Carissa Villacorta.

The subject of the book's reflections and observations is not so much the city itself, although like in "Sex and the City" it's an unavoidable "character" in itself, but the people who inhabit the metropolis, who are studied as interesting specimens of humanity by Villacorta, who plays both observer and participant as a newcomer trying to blend in.

Here is her take on New Yorkers in "Current Status, Changing Address":

"New Yorkers are so mobile. When they're not on the train, they're in a taxi, on the bus or on the plane. When they're not running meetings, they're running errands. When they're not walking, they're walking the dog."

"They are ALWAYS on the road. They're also always moving."

"Stay here for three years, you sleep in an average of four apartments, and a higher average of beds. You're a student—you live in a dorm. You get tired of curfew—you move on your own. You get a promotion—you move to Manhattan. They lay you off—you search in Weehawken. Your roommate is crazy—you move yet again. Your landlord is crazy—you run for your life. Your parents are coming—you look for more space. You find somebody—you move in with him. You lose him—you lose home too. You move far away—you get tired of commuting. Some New Yorkers simply get tired. They stay in that place? Then they lose their tide... they're no longer New Yorkers."

AND finally, out in the stands, "Story" magazine, which in this issue features "Fiction that Breaks the Spell," contemporary fairy tales that speak of current problems and everyday life in the idiom of fantasy. As always, a fascinating read, though sometimes the art work makes reading the text quite a chore.

As usual, the creatively written advertisements alone are worth the cover price of P150. Pick up a copy and treat yourself to trips of fantasy, humor and heart and post-modern irony that should help you survive this schmaltzy season.

And yet, without America and its power, the prospects in all these places are still bleaker: more dangers and more chaos.

The situation is the same with respect to global growth, energy, resource management, climate change, environment, nuclear proliferation, arms control, and terrorism. None of these problems can be resolved or even contained unilaterally. Yet no attempted solution will get very far without the US and its decisive leadership.

This also applies to the future of the law of nations, the newly created international criminal law, and the UN. Unless these rules and institutions are further developed, globalization, too, will take an ever more chaotic shape.

Madeleine Albright once called the US the "indispensable nation." She was right then, and she is still right today. Only one power can rob the US of its unique position: America itself. The question today is whether the current crisis of American consciousness marks the beginning of America's decline or, let us hope, the beginning of a return to multilateralism. Will America hark back to the spirit of 1945 or, despite being sobered and disappointed, decide to stick to its lone and lonely path?

No other power will be able to assume America's role in the world for the foreseeable future. The alternative to American leadership is a vacuum and increasing chaos. But within one or two decades maybe China will define the rules, if the US continues to reject its multilateral responsibilities. For all these reasons not only America's friends have a vital interest in a US return to multilateralism. Given the dangers of unilateralism for the current world order, so do America's enemies.

Project Syndicate/Institute of Human Sciences

Joschka Fischer was Germany's foreign minister and vice chancellor from 1998 to 2005. A leader in the Green Party for nearly 20 years, he is now a visiting professor at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School.

Holiday greetings

DEAR PUBLIC SERVANTS (A.K.A. POLITICIANS):

Before anything else, let me greet you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

I would like to return the favor of being greeted by your colorful posters and streamers every morning as I pass by the streets of your respective districts. As early as the first week of December, I could already feel the spirit of Christmas because of your Christmas greetings and wishes for peace and goodwill, not to mention your "star-struck" smiles which never fail to put a smile on my face.

Your posters seem to be a common sight this season. They are in public places and even pasted on private walls. They are nailed to trees and electric posts.

I think every street already has some kind of greetings from you. I remember seeing posters and streamers similar to these Christmas posters, but with different greetings, such as "Happy Fiesta," "Happy Halloween," "Congratulations Graduates," etc. These greetings come from the same people. Similar faces, similar smiles, similar names are on those posters containing different greetings. I suppose the pictures on your posters are your best or perhaps you do not have any other picture, because every year I am being greeted by the same face, the same hairstyle, the same dress, the same posture.

Some of you have become so creative in designing streamers so that only the greetings need to be changed to fit the occasion, be it a fiesta, graduation, Easter, Christmas, etc. Of course that is an economical way to do it, but there is always the risk that others will notice it and think you are insincere.

I keep trying to convince myself all this exposure is in fulfillment of your obligation as public servants to reach out to your constituents. The people need to feel that their leaders care for them and so they are present at every celebration that is significant to them.

But more often, I am skeptical about the purpose of your posters and streamers. Are they really intended to spread the spirit of Christmas in its meaningful sense or are they part of your publicity campaign for the next elections?

Correct me if I am wrong, but I have noticed some kind of pattern in the contents of your posters and streamers. They always carry your close-up pictures in which you are either smiling or grinning like a show-biz personality and your greetings and of course your name in big letters.

I have also observed that your pictures and names practically crowd out your messages. In fact, they give me the impression that your names and faces are the only things you want the people to see and read—not your greetings. If the purpose of your posters and streamers are to greet your constituents on special occasions, is it not logical that the greetings should be larger than your names?

Assuming you are sincere in wishing everyone will be happy during this Christmas season or on any other occasion, is it absolutely essential that they be reminded of how you look like and that the greetings come from you? The public just might wonder why their public servants are like show-biz personalities competing for exposure. Your posters even compete for attention with other billboards along the highways as if you are endorsing some products.

Do you really think that people will believe that you are serving them well with your greetings pasted on posters and streamers? It is quite obvious that their purpose is political. They are not much different from the campaign posters scattered all over the land when elections are approaching. In fact, when such greetings appear in profusion, I am reminded that the next elections are only a few months away.

Have you ever paused to consider if your posters and streamers benefit the majority of our people in any way? Most people I know think they are a waste of paper and ink and money. What our people need are projects that help lift them out of poverty or improve their standard of living.

I do not mean to tell you how to spend your own money, but something tells me you are not using your money to put up all those posters and streamers. And considering how much your colorful posters and streamers must have cost, I can think of more than a dozen ways it could be better spent, like buying food and other basic necessities and distributing them to our less fortunate countrymen as gifts for Christmas. I know that most of you already have programs to distribute relief goods to some depressed areas in your towns or districts. But you could have reached more people if you had used the money for your posters and streamers to buy more essential items for your constituents.

I have also noticed that when you distribute goods to the poor, you don't forget to put your smiling pictures and your names on the plastic bags. Can you not give away anything without forcing others to know it came from you and therefore they should be grateful to you? Can you not give anyone without expecting something in return? Jesus gave his life to save sinners, but He never asked anyone to put up a sign saying, "I saved this soul—Jesus Christ." Can you no longer give for the sake of giving? I know that there is no such thing as a free lunch, but can you not make an exception of this holy season?

My dear public servants, please pardon my naiveté or lack of understanding of "political realities." I just thought you might need something to reflect upon during the holidays. May the true spirit of Christmas be with you all!

Heherson U. Butac, 20, is a fourth year accounting student at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines.

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THEY SAID

Life in law

"What breathes life into law is the spirit of man, not the spirit of the law moving man."
—Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales in his homily during the Church-led prayer rally of thanksgiving at the Luneta

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FOR YOUR READING PLEASURE, IN THE RARE moments when you can catch your breath and retreat from the frenzy of the season, here are some books and publications that came my way recently.

"The River Flows On" is the sequel to "An Instant is This Life," the life story of former Education Secretary Lourdes Reynes Quisumbing. "The River Flows On" takes up where the previous volume ends, starting in 2003 when she gathers an extended family of children, in-laws and grandchildren to welcome a daughter and her family coming home for a reunion.

The book is divided into two parts. The first is "Cherishing Each Moment," consisting of "moments, memories, miracles and mysteries" which reveal to the reader the rich inner life and richer family life of Quisumbing who, even as she takes on responsibilities that would daunt anyone much younger than her 80-plus years, manages to connect and re-connect with a wide-ranging network of family and "adopted" family. The second part "Speaking from the Heart" consists of speeches and addresses she prepared and delivered in the course of her travels around the country and different parts of the world, speaking mainly on education, the role of women and values education.

Flipping through the pages and pausing from time to time on more compelling sections, one realizes just what a resource the country has enjoyed in Quisumbing, who before her stint in government served as president of Miriam College, and after her retirement continued to "educate educators" by addressing assemblies around Asia and doing her share by visiting various institutions around the country seeking accreditation for graduate education.

Her example is compelling proof of how older people can continue contributing to the nation's welfare, and how a woman can create a life rich in complexity and challenge by combining both her career and family life, seeking balance and never compromising standards. Read it for inspiration and encouragement!

"COMMON Threads, Uncommon Lives" profiles awardees of The Outstanding Filipinos (Tofil) Award from 1988 to 2005, a search con-

The curse of unilateralism

THE REALIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES that the war in Iraq has been lost is perhaps the most momentous fact of international politics in 2006. The time of American unilateralism is objectively over. Whether US foreign policy will come to reflect this fact, only the future will tell.

Unfortunately, this also means that a unique opportunity has been lost. For only the US—with all its power and sense of mission—had the ability to establish a new world order at the beginning of the 21st century. To achieve this, the US would have had to subordinate its power to the goal of shaping the new order, much as it did at the close of World War II in 1945. Instead, America succumbed to the temptation of unilateralism.

National greatness for a world power always arises from its ability to shape the world. If a great power forgets this, or loses the ability to act accordingly, it begins to decline. It is almost tempting to think that America's great Cold War opponent, the Soviet Union, with its sudden disappearance 15 years ago this month, left its own Trojan horse for America—the poisoned gift of unilateralism.

Without a fundamental turnaround in American political consciousness, the unilateralist amnesia of US foreign policy will have far-reaching consequences and leave a huge vacuum in the global system. No other nation—not China, Europe, India, or Russia—has the power and the sense of mission to take on America's role. Only America was (and potentially still is) able to fuse realism and idealism, self-interest and ethics, in its foreign policy.

Only the US pursued a foreign policy that conceived freedom and democracy as its mission. This was not always and everywhere the case—certainly not in Latin America. But where it did apply, America's strength and willingness to seek international cooperation created an order whose institutions still hold the world together.

The UN, Nato, the IMF and the World Bank, the law of nations and international criminal law, even today's free and united Europe—all are

WORLD
VIEW

Joschka Fischer



crowning achievements of US foreign policy. They mark the moments in history when America's power was used to further a global order, while also pursuing America's own interests in the most effective and sustainable manner.

America's departure from this great tradition did not begin with the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Indeed, as early as the final years of the cold war, the US began to view the whole system of international treaties and institutions as an obstacle to enforcing its own interests. America's foreign policy elite increasingly came to perceive the US as a Gulliver tied down and oppressed by political midgits, with their laws of nations, treaties, and multilateral institutions. The existing world order, created by the US itself, was first devalued in American eyes, then weakened, and finally consciously attacked.

Thus, the current debate in the US about the consequences of defeat in Iraq still falls short—because, despite all the critiques of American policy, that debate is still premised on the unilateral use of American power. This applies to the views of the Democratic opposition as well as to the Baker-Hamilton report.

What is needed is a conscious, deliberate return of US foreign policy to multilateralism. This mental turnaround is, indeed, essential if things are to improve, because the situation in Iraq represents, above all, a defeat of America's unilateralist orientation.

The Middle East, North Korea, Darfur, Central and East Africa, the Caucasus—in none of these places can the US still act successfully on its own.

Truce, time for rethinking war and peace strategies

THE CRISIS CAUSED BY THE disaster in Bicol calls for urgent and concerted action by all sectors of society. After the terrible loss of lives due to the landslides, the people need a ceasefire—for humanitarian reasons—to ensure safety and security for critical relief work.

After so many extrajudicial, political or "unexplained" killings, Filipinos deserve a Christmas ceasefire—a ceasefire not based on the military's assessment or peace strategy, but one based simply on the songs of angels: "Peace on earth, goodwill to all." This may not be enough to achieve long-term peace, but it is a necessary element, without which we could fall into hubris.

The ceasefire should be time for a real rethinking of war and peace strategies by all sides. The government policy on the communist insurgency—which authorities see in media persons, religious lead-

ers, party-list representatives, farmers, student researchers, etc.—cannot win the peace. Already, it has resulted in more killings and counterattacks. Sadly, the lessons of martial law have not been learned.

The communist "reaffirmists" must accept that, in their protracted people's war, they are no closer to victory. More important, the people do not want to pursue this war.

We, the participants of "Waging Peace in the Philippines Conference—Twenty Years of Philippine Peace Processes," therefore appeal for a humanitarian ceasefire in the Bicol region and other disaster-affected areas during this period of relief and rehabilitation. We further urge a stop to extrajudicial killings, and call for the observance of a lengthened Christmas ceasefire leading to a vigorous and sustained pursuit of

peace processes, including formal peace negotiations between the government and the National Democratic Front, and between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

At a time of political turmoil and continuing crisis in governance, we support the use of peaceful means to assert the political, electoral and socio-economic reforms needed to dismantle the structures that breed conflict. Nurturing the precious few gains of 20 years of peace processes, the citizen peacemakers commit to be a vigilant third party even at this time of seemingly immovable impasse.

May the silence of the guns this Christmas serve as a foundation where the hope for a just and enduring peace can grow.

—KAREN N. TAÑADA,
executive director,
GZO Peace Institute,
Ateneo de Manila University

Not chair's position

FIRST OF ALL, I WOULD LIKE TO thank the INQUIRER for giving a concerned individual like me a space to share my view and opinion. I actually feel honored to see my article published in a widely read and, perhaps, the most credible newspaper in the country.

But let me clarify that it was I who wrote the letter titled "Majority rule is not meant to sustain graft and greed," which appeared under the name of Dr. Francisco Nemenzo, chair of Laban ng Masa. (PDI, 12/20/06) The letter expressed Laban ng Masa's general position on its opposition to the brazen attempt of the Arroyo administration to railroad Charter change.

Laban ng Masa is a coalition of different progressive groups and individuals. It is governed by a political dynamic of consensus and individual autonomy. Each group or personality in the party may make their own statement as long as it follows the political stand of the coalition.

I believe that the error was just a minor one and may have come from us for not clarifying the signatory of the article. It should show that Laban ng Masa is not bound by a single opinion but its members respect each other's position. This is what democracy means. This is how the transitional revolutionary government, which Laban ng Masa is proposing, will work in pushing for the genuine people's agenda.

—DARWIN MENDIOLA,
media coordinator,
Laban ng Masa,
labanngmasa@yahoo.com

PCSO's contribution to PhilHealth: from lotto, not from sweepstakes

IN THE NEWS REPORT "Jinggoy blocks P4-M increase in PSC's budget" (PDI, 12/3/06), Sen. Franklin Drilon said that "the PCSO (Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office) failed to remit its P11-million annual obligation to the PSC (Philippine Sports Commission) for two years in a row since 2005, and now owed the agency some P22 million." He also said that "the PCSO has run out of funds because it paid for the Philippine Health Insurance (PhilHealth) cards of indigents who were enrolled in the program in 2000." The funds came from the PCSO's lotto income, not from the sweepstakes.

Please allow me to clarify. Republic Act 6487, which created the PSC in 1991, says that the PCSO must allocate a certain percentage of its income to the PSC from the sweepstakes. Unfortunately, with the introduction of the lotto, the sweepstakes have not been earning much, for obvious reasons. The PCSO has had very few small draws these past

years. For this reason, it has been unable to give its legally mandated contribution to the PSC.

That said, Senator Drilon should not fault the PCSO for its contribution to PhilHealth; it is more important, I think, that we take care of our poor people's health. A sickly people can put to naught the sports program, if we come right down to it. A healthy people can produce better athletes. Health care is the most important and is most needed by our people.

Is there anything wrong with helping the poor, sick and needy people? Please let us put our priorities in order.

I say: pass the anti-terrorism bill; and tell Sen. Jinggoy Estrada to give his approval to the proposed P4-million increase in the PSC's budget.

—MANUEL L. MORATÓ,
director, Philippine Charity
Sweepstakes Office,
Quezon Institute Compound,
E. Rodriguez Ave., Quezon City

Who must pay for damaged transmission lines?

TRANSCO (NATIONAL TRANSMISSION CORPORATION) is reportedly filing with the Energy Regulatory Commission applications to recover the cost of damages caused by typhoons on its transmission lines. This will mean Transco will be charging higher "wheeling" rates, which will result in more expensive electricity for consumers.

Typhoon "Seniang" destroyed 116 steel towers and 887 wooden poles of transmission lines. According to ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano, the destruction caused by the typhoons that hit the country has reached at least P793.44 million.

Like storms, floods, volcanic

eruptions, earthquakes, tidal waves, landslides and tropical depressions, typhoons are considered "force majeure."

Under Article 10 of the Transmission Wheeling Rate Guidelines (TWRG), Transco may seek the approval of the ERC to pass on to consumers the cost of damages to transmission lines.

Transco is a government-owned-and-controlled corporation that has assumed the electrical transmission functions of the National Power Corp. Question: Should the government not subsidize partly the cost of such damages instead of charging it 100 percent on consumers? In a develop-

ing country, the government must help free the consumers from the bondage of poverty. Why impoverish them more by charging them the cost of damages wrought by force majeure?

Transco is one of the largest corporations in the country with physical assets worth around \$2 billion. Its direct customers include power plants which supply electricity to power distributors, electric cooperatives and other utilities.

—MYRNA R. VALDEZ,
financial planner, practicing CPA
and president, MPV Asset
Management Company,
mpvaldez_2000@yahoo.com

A welcome PopCom stand

THE BOLD DECISION OF THE Commission on Population to promote only natural family planning methods (PDI/ 12/7/06) stands to good reason.

Sheer logic tells us that anything consistent with nature must be good. There seems to be no quarrel with scientists when they say that man, as the custodian of the material world, has to respect the innate balance in nature. Some recent natural calamities painfully reminded us of this reality. When abused, nature unleashes its fury beyond man's imagination.

The life-giving systems operating within man are far more complex than the external world he lives in. Therefore, with greater

caution and fear should we attempt to tamper or destroy this balance in man's nature. We have to learn to work "within the system" of our endowed capacities, using intellect and will, harmonizing emotions and passions with plans and ambitions.

Artificial methods to plan families promote "cheating on man's nature" by encouraging man to ignore the natural consequences of a human act. By contrast, natural family planning methods train him in self-mastery and in being fully accountable for his decisions.

Kudos to the PopCom!

—JOSEPHINE JAVELONA,
jqjav@yahoo.com

No final Ulap decision on second initiative

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO PUT IN PROPER perspective the supposed move by the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines (Ulap) to "rush" the amendment of the Constitution, right after the Christmas season, through a second people's initiative petition. (PDI, 12/21/06)

While this is a proposal that I certainly want to happen, there is nothing final yet about it as far as Ulap is concerned, contrary to the impression that the INQUIRER report, which was based on an interview I had with one of the paper's reporters, may have created in the public mind.

In the interview, I made it clear that the idea of filing a second petition (soon enough so that a plebiscite could be held simultaneously with the May 2007 polls) as well as the idea that it should be limited to the switch from the bicameral to a unicameral presidential system (so as to avoid the legal and procedural flaws cited by the Supreme Court) were personal views.

Although most local executives agree with President Macapagal-Arroyo that Charter change should be "pursued with urgency and vigor," Ulap has yet to formally tackle—let alone reach an official agreement—on the issue of taking another crack at Cha-cha via the people's initiative (following the Supreme Court's decision to reverse its 1997 ruling in Santiago vs Comelec), and declare Republic Act 6735 as a sufficient law.

Hence, I am in no position to commit Ulap to a second petition or to the timing of such an initiative. In fact, the INQUIRER story accurately quoted me as saying that no Ulap meeting had been set this Christmas season, so there was no way for its officials to reach a decision on such a pressing concern as Charter change.

But whatever group eventually takes up the cudgels for a overwhelming majority of our people who want genuine change, it should act fast enough in pursuing a second petition, so that the plebiscite to ratify the proposed simple amendment can piggyback on next year's balloting.

Personally, I believe that Cha-cha must be pursued in whatever constitutional or legal way possible because our country will never attain greater political stability and higher economic growth without first ridding our dysfunctional presidential system of the structural defect that has poisoned the political atmosphere and induced institutional gridlocks.

The majority of our people obviously share this sentiment—and frustration with our gridlock-prone bicameral presidential system—as can be gleaned from the fact that the first petition was able to muster the support of almost 9 million Filipinos, 6.3 million of whom have been verified by election registrars as registered voters.

We cannot fail the 9 million petitioners and all other Filipinos who are in desperate search for genuine reforms meant to finally better their lives and turn our country into a First World economy. We owe it to them to pursue Cha-cha now, in whatever constitutional and legal way possible.

—BEN EVARDONE,
governor, Eastern Samar and PRO,
League of Provinces of the Philippines

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Canada offers help in peace monitoring

COTABATO CITY—CANADA HAS OFFERED TO help monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Steven Rheault-Kihara, political relations counselor of the Canadian Embassy in Manila, made the offer during a meeting with MILF leaders in Maguindanao on Monday.

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF political affairs chief, said Rheault-Kihara told them his government was

willing to send a representative to the International Monitoring Team (IMT), which is being led by Malaysia.

Earlier, Japan also sent a representative to the IMT.

Mohagher Iqbal, MILF chief negotiator, said Rheault-Kihara also told them Canada was inter-

ested in sharing its expertise on governance with the indigenous peoples of Mindanao.

Aside from Canada, Jaafar said Sweden also formally informed them of its intention to participate in the peace process.

"Sweden is asking us to allow them 10 slots in the IMT," he said.

But Jaafar said the MILF could not decide on the offers by itself.

"It will be decided upon by Malaysia, the Philippine government and our party," he said.

Iqbal said the offers could be

discussed by the major parties when peace negotiations resume.

"We will discuss their plan to join in the IMT when peace talks resume in Kuala Lumpur next year," Iqbal said.

The peace talks hit a snag on the issue of territory. The MILF was insisting the inclusion of about 1,000 villages in the juridical Bangsamoro entity without any precondition but the government has said it was only willing to part with 600 villages. The government also said the future

of the Bangsamoro entity would still be subjected to a plebiscite.

But even with the suspension of the talks, the MILF said it was still cooperating with the government, particularly in efforts against terror and criminality.

As this developed, Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, called on businessmen in Linamon, Lanao del Norte not to give in to reported extortion attempts by some rebel leaders.

Earlier, the business community in the said town received an extortion letter, which appeared to

have come from the MILF's 103rd Base Command.

In the said letter, businessmen were asked to give from P3,000-10,000 per month "to protect the business establishments' owner from ambush, kidnapping and any form of criminalities and atrocities."

Kabalu said he will bring the issue before the MILF central committee.

The central committee is the rebel group's highest policy-making body. **Edwin Fernandez, Jeffrey Maitem and Richel Umel, Inquirer Mindanao**

BFAR imposes ban on 'biya' in Sorsogon waters

SORSOGON CITY—TWO PERSONS DIED Tuesday after eating "biya" or goby fish (*Gobius criniger*), prompting the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to impose a permanent ban on the fish locally known here as "tambagoy."

BFAR said "biya" naturally contains a toxin called tetrodotoxin (TTX), which makes the fish specie unedible and unfit for consumption.

Provincial health officer Dr. Edgar Garcia said the symptoms for tetrodotoxin poisoning are very similar to paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP), which claimed nine victims in Sorsogon.

He said the symptoms of TTX poisoning are numbness of the lips and tongue, impairment of lungs, motor functions and mental faculties, and drop in blood pressure.

Symptoms set in rapidly within 5 to 30 minutes, he added.

Serafin Lacdang, head of the fishery section of the Provincial Agriculture Office, said there have been 16 victims of TTX poisoning since Dec. 1, two of whom died.

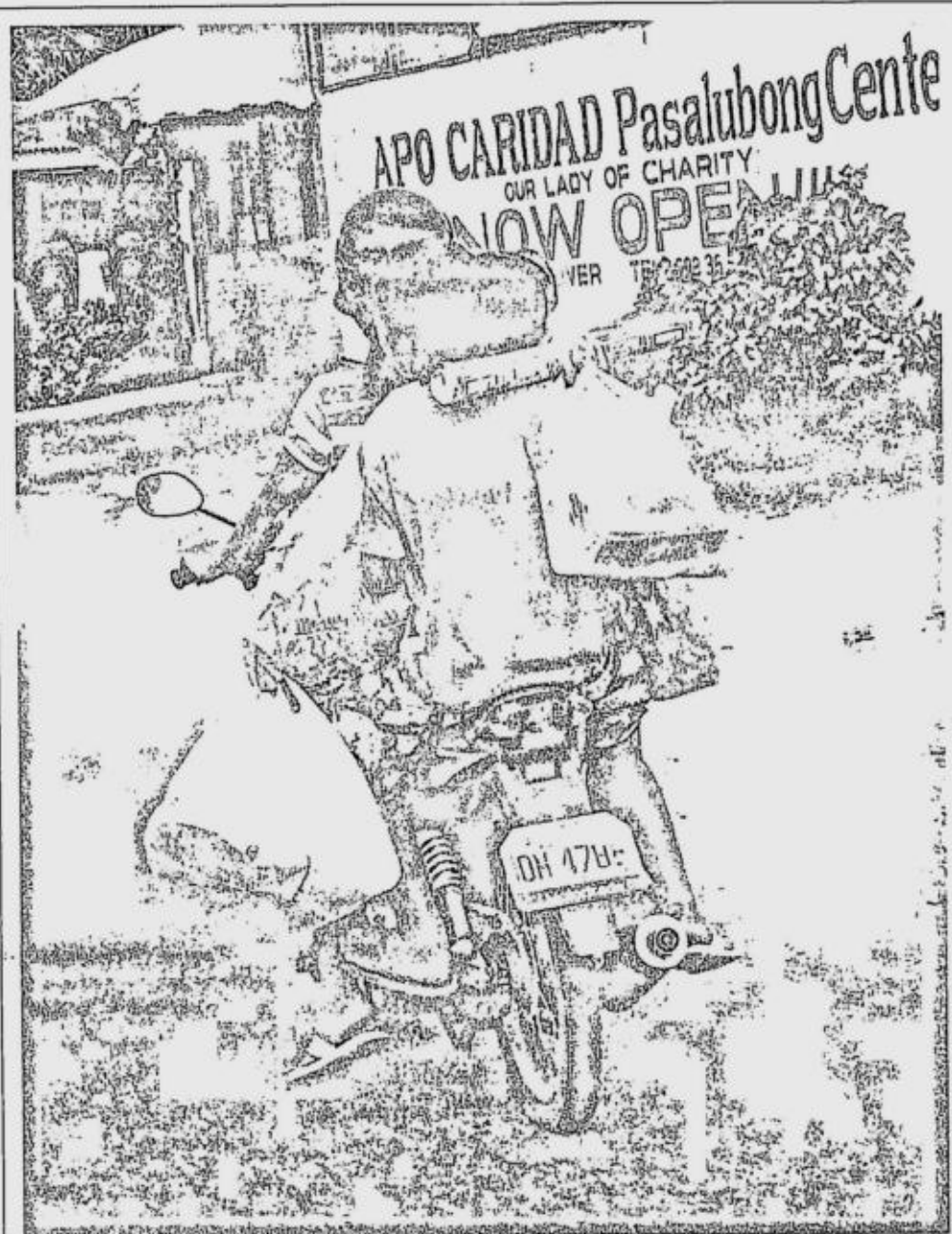
One of the victims was identified as Arlington Dacillo, 47, of Barangay Monbon, Irosin and another was only known as a 5-year-old boy from Barangay Lungib, Casiguran.

Lacdang said they have intensified their information dissemination after noting a sudden increase in TTX poisoning cases.

He said the cheap goby fish became popular among poor families, especially those hardest hit by the recent typhoons.

Garcia added that victims of red tide poisoning continue to increase even if no more deaths were reported other than the nine casualties earlier registered.

Bobby Labalan, Inquirer Southern Luzon



HOLIDAY RUSH

Three persons try to balance themselves on a motorcycle to go home to San Juan, La Union.

Woman facing rebellion charges gives birth in jail

SAN FRANCISCO, AGUSAN DEL Sur—A mother facing rebellion charges and her newly-born baby will have to spend Christmas inside their cramped cell at the Provincial Jail in Libertad, Butuan City, officials said.

Analyn Jania, 26, a resident of Barangay 3 in Buenavista, Agusan del Norte, gave birth to a baby boy on Dec. 19 at the Agusan del Norte Provincial Hospital.

Jania and three other companions were earlier arrested by intelligence operatives of the 30th Infantry Battalion on Dec. 3 in Barangay Durian in Las Nieves town for allegedly being New People's Army (NPA) rebels.

Nineteen days later, she gave birth to a son.

Two days after she recuperated, Jania and the infant were taken back to her detention cell, which she shares with seven other female inmates.

Tito Azura, acting provincial warden, said Jania and her child will likely spend Christmas at the women's detention cell since the provincial social welfare has not yet acted on their recommendation.

Azura said they asked social welfare officials to take custody of the child because the jail is not healthy for him.

He said much as they want to provide the child with a healthy environment, the jail do not have a separate facility for nursing mothers.

Seldio Pilongo, chief of the protection and monitoring section of the Commission on Human Rights in Caraga, said it was not proper

for children, especially infants, to be placed in jail along with their detained mothers.

Pilongo said doing so would be a violation of the right of a child to live on a healthy and safe environment.

Like Azura, Pilongo said the social welfare department should take care of the child.

Analyn Lumawag, deputy secretary general of Karapatan in Caraga, said they have questioned the accusations against Jania, Jovito Orapa, 47, Don Dafe Alicos, 22, and Rhina Bustillo, 21.

Lumawag said based on their investigation, the alleged NPA rebels were arbitrating a land dispute when arrested.

In the complaint filed before the Provincial Prosecutor's Office, Pfc Romulo Monga and civilian assets Many Domino and Rodel Domino claimed the raid was conducted after the military received reports the four suspects were engaged in extortion activities.

They said during the raid, Orapa and Alicos yielded handguns.

They said Jania and Bustillo admitted they were NPA members when the military operatives confronted them.

Lumawag said Orapa and Alicos told them they were tortured into admission.

But Supt. Elmer Duyo, chief of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Caraga, said Karapatan should show proof.

Chris Panganiban and Franklin Catiguid, Inquirer Mindanao

Antique board bars 2 reporters from covering sessions

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—THE ANTIQUE provincial board had barred two journalists from covering sessions and meetings of the board for alleged unethical and unprofessional reporting.

The board, in a resolution passed during its regular session on Dec. 7, declared Rey Alcarde and Ely Suyom as persona non grata. The journalists are prohibited from attending the sessions at the provincial capitol or in other venues that the session and meetings will be held.

Alcarde is publisher and editor of the Antique-based newspaper Newsbreak while Suyom is Antique bureau chief of local newspaper News Express and a correspondent of the Manila Times. Suyom also hosts a program of the community radio station

106.9 Radyo Natin based in Hamtic town in Antique.

The resolution also barred the two journalists from soliciting advertisements and notices from the provincial government.

The ban will be effective until Suyom and Alcarde apologized to board members and to other officials and employees of the provincial government during a session of the legislative body.

Suyom said the resolution was "unlawful" and said he would contest it in court, aside from filing administrative cases against the board members.

Alcarde said the resolution violates the Constitutional provision that "no law shall be passed abridging the freedom of the speech, or of the press..."

He said the resolution was "contrary to the policy of the national government for transparency."

The ban will also deprive An-

tiqueños of access to the sessions of the provincial board, said Alcarde.

The resolution, sponsored by provincial board member Juanita de la Cruz, was approved by six board members allied with Antique Gov. Salvacion Zaldivar-Perez. Two board members voted against the resolution.

The two journalists are vocal critics of Perez and have been accused of favoring her political rival Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier.

Perez has denied having a hand in the resolution while Javier has defended both Alcarde and Suyom.

In their resolution, the board members said the reports and commentaries of Suyom and Alcarde were "designed to foment and sow political intrigue and discord, fan the fires of distrust and dishonor, and directed towards selective elected and appointed officials of the province."

It alleged that the two journalists

violated basic rules of journalism and ethical and profession conduct.

The resolution alleged that the reports and commentaries of Suyom and Alcarde were done with "gross contempt, ridicule and insult and has undermined the people's confidence and trust" for the provincial officials.

De la Cruz claimed that Suyom and Alcarde distorted the information that they gathered from their coverage of the board's sessions. She also accused the two of being unfair because they did not get the side of the board members in their reports.

"It's too much. This is not press freedom anymore," De la Cruz said in a telephone interview.

She said the board members plan to file libel and other cases against the two journalists.

The National Union of Journalists of the Philippines said it was sending a team to Antique to investigate the issue.

Radioman in Ecija survives attack

CABANATUAN CITY—A CORRESPONDENT OF dzMM radio station was shot and wounded by a man aboard a motorcycle in San Jose City on Friday.

Rufino "Butch" Gamboa was aboard a tricycle on his way home when he was attacked.

Gamboa, who is also a reporter for the provincial radio station dwNE in Palayan City, suffered two bullet wounds in his left arm and chest.

He covered an affair where Nueva Ecija Vice Gov. Mariano Cristino Joson was the speaker on Friday.

Gamboa's son took him to the affair aboard the family's jeepney. Gamboa, however, decided to send his son home earlier and he took a tricycle after his coverage.

The motorcycle went close to the driver's side of the tricycle and the gunman fired successively at Gamboa.

Gamboa, though wounded, alighted from the tricycle and ran.

Reports said the tricycle driver was unhurt.

Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon



LITTLE SANTA CLAUS

Children dressed in Santa Claus costume take part in a Christmas program in Davao.

DENNIS JAY SANTOS/INQUIRER MINDANAO

ROUNDUP

Cabanatuan ABC president shot dead

CABANATUAN CITY—The president of the Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) here was shot and killed by a lone gunman on Thursday night. Augusto Santiago, 52, barangay captain of Sangitan West here, and another barangay official, Ernesto Ferrer, had just come from a cockfight derby at about 11 p.m. when the gunman attacked them. Santiago was shot in the back and died instantly while Ferrer, barangay captain of Nabao here, was unhurt. Chief Insp. Cresencio de Asis, chief of the Cabanatuan police's crime laboratory, said an empty shell of a .45 cal. gun was recovered from the crime scene. He said the suspect did not take Santiago's gun and money, which the official reportedly won in the cockfight. Police said no one witnessed the incident. De Asis said Ferrer was walking ahead as they were going to Santiago's car parked in a gasoline station along the Maharlika Highway. Ferrer, police said, failed to note the gunman's features because he did not see the actual shooting. Marilou Santiago, the official's wife, said she could not think of any reason for the attack. Reports said Santiago, who was serving his second term as ABC president and was an ex-officio member of the city council, was planning to run for councilor next year. Santiago's murder happened less than two days after a group of men ambushed Councilor Elpidio Rueda of Gapan City and his companions on Wednesday. Rueda survived the attack but one of his aides was killed.

Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon

Palayan wins PIM in contest

CABANATUAN CITY—The Palayan City government won the grand prize of P1 million for putting up a boundary arch that fittingly captured the historical, cultural, residents' aspiration, and other attributes of the place. It bested 14 other Nueva Ecija towns and cities which were finalists in the boundary arch contest launched by the provincial government in March. The contest was meant to serve as main attraction for tourism and trade in a particular town or city aside from being a worthy marker. The arches of Talugot and Peñaranda towns were declared second placers. They shared the P500,000 prize. Bongabon town was third (P300,000) while Sto. Domingo town was fourth (P200,000).

Anselmo Roque, Inquirer Central Luzon

Fire guts homes of 9 families

KAUSWAGAN, Lanao del Norte—At least nine families would be spending a sad Christmas after a fire, which lasted for nearly two hours, gutted their homes here on Friday. Fire Officer 3 Dexter Mabalod of the Bacolod fire station said it was fortunate that no one was injured during the fire that hit the houses along Roxas St. around 1:30 a.m. Mabalod said the fire started from a sawdust-fed cooking stove left unattended inside the house owned by Modesto Natividad. The fire damage was estimated at P5 million.

Richel Umel, Inquirer Mindanao

Vice mayor hits rumors

ROSARIO, Agusan del Sur—The vice mayor here has cried foul over rumors spreading around this town that he is supporting the New People's Army (NPA). Vice Mayor Antonio Petalcorin denied any links with the NPA, adding that the rumors were just part of dirty tricks in politics as election time nears. His wife, Dr. Zenaida Petalcorin, municipal health officer of San Francisco town, has been distributing an open letter to the 10 villages of this town denying her husband's involvement with the communist movement. She said the controversy has put their family in great danger. Petalcorin called on the military to investigate and clear his name.

Chris Panganiban, Inquirer Mindanao

NPA rebels raid house of Surigao town mayor

BUTUAN CITY—COMMUNIST rebels raided the house of Mayor Clemente Sandigan Jr. of Malibon, Surigao del Norte early morning yesterday and briefly held several persons, including the official's mother, the police said.

The raid came a day after the government declared a four-day Christmas truce with the New People's Army (NPA).

Chief Supt. Antonio Nafas, Caraga police chief, said about 50 heavily-armed rebels stormed Sandigan's house in Barangay Poblacion around 6 a.m. and disarmed the mayor's security guards.

Sandigan, he said, was not around when the rebels came.

"It was fortunate Sandigan was not around," Nafas said.

He said the rebels held at gunpoint Sandigan's mother, who he did not identify, his maids and security personnel for a few minutes before they fled, taking with them M16 rifles.

But the NPA said they took more than two firearms.

In a statement e-mailed to the INQUIRER, Ruby Guerra, spokesperson of the NPA's Pulang Diwata command, said they took away six firearms and thousands of ammunition

during the raid.

Nafas said Sandigan, a former Army colonel, has been implementing programs against the rebels.

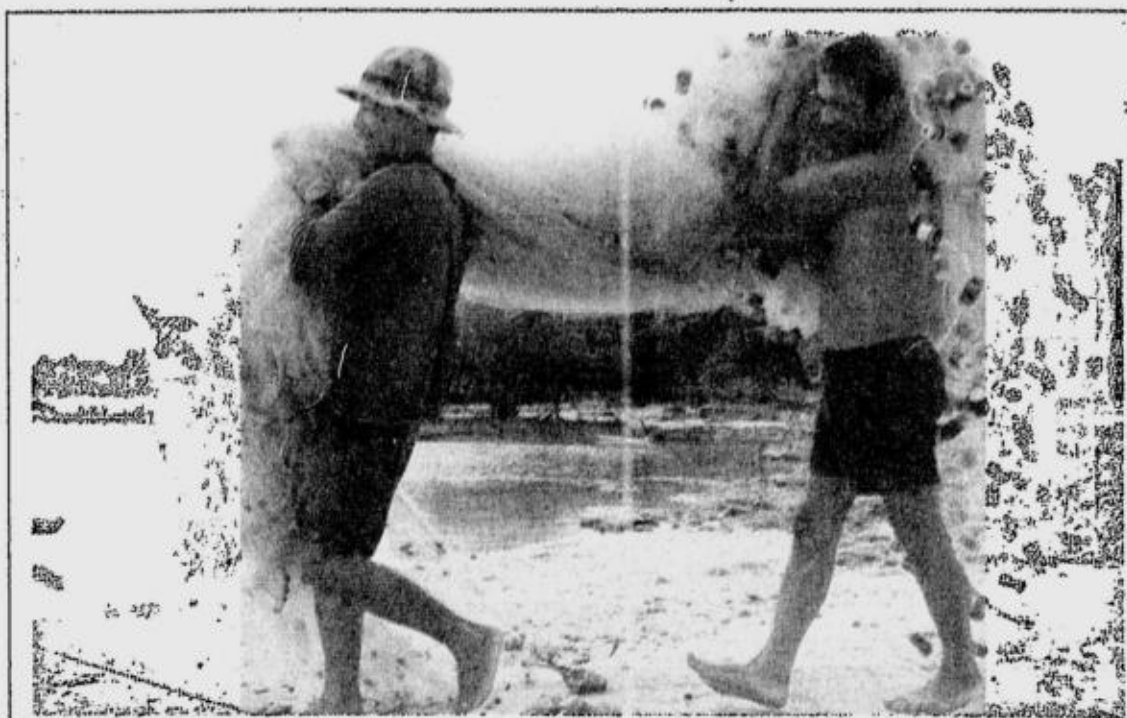
"He is known for his anti-NPA drive. His campaign has hurt the rebels," Nafas said.

But Guerra said they targeted Sandigan because he was an abusive mayor.

"He's arming abusive militiamen who harassed civilians," Guerra said.

She also accused the mayor of committing atrocities against civilians in the area.

Franklin Caliguid and Germinela Lacorte, Inquirer Mindanao



BACK TO THE WATERS

Residents of Barangay Tando, Nueva Valencia town in Guimaras are slowly recovering from the ill-effects of the oil spill that hit the area. They are now gearing to go back to fishing.

JOI ALMA RER VISAYAS

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29 fishermen rescued, 3 bodies found

By Gabriel Cardinosa
Inquirer Northern Luzon

DAGUPAN CITY—AT LEAST 29 FISHERMEN, who were earlier reported to be among those missing after their boats were battered by rough seas last week, were found stranded at the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea, a task force official said on Friday.

Army Col. Gregory Cayetano, on-scene commander of the Task Force Infanta, said the fishermen's presence in the shoal was reported by one of their companions who managed to return to Infanta, Pangasinan, on Thursday dawn.

"To verify his report, we immediately sent a Navy Cessna plane to the area and the pilot radioed us that indeed, there were people there," Cayetano said.

He said their reports also indicated that three bodies, believed to be among those reported missing, had been found.

One of them was found tied up to a boat some 90 nautical miles off Infanta town and another was found in the waters off Sto. Tomas, La Union. The third body was found at the Tondaligan Beach in this city.

Cayetano said Avelino Quizon, 50, the fisherman from Infanta who reported the plight of his fellow fishermen, was with eight others in the boat that sailed for 21 hours from the shoal, which is about 140 nautical miles from Infanta.

"He actually took the risk because the waves were still strong around the shoal," Cayetano said.

He said a Coast Guard plane on Friday morning took off from Metro Manila to drop food and water for the stranded fishermen.

"A Navy ship has been there since Thursday but it cannot get near the shoal because of the waves and the reef. We are just waiting for the water to calm down," Cayetano said.

Provisions

"We hope to get them out of the shoal within the day (Friday)," he said.

He said Quizon told him that the stranded fishermen survived because big foreign fishing vessels, which have enough provisions, have also been stranded in the shoal.

"Nakikain na lang sila (They just asked food from the crew members of the other vessels)," Cayetano said.

As of 11 a.m. Friday, 14 more fishermen were rescued, reducing the number of the missing to 54.

Of the missing, 24 are from Infanta, four from Agno, 11 from Bolinao, 11 from Dasol, all in Pangasinan, and four from Sta. Cruz, Zambales.

The fishermen were swept by strong winds, locally known as "nortada (north wind)," that whipped up huge waves and battered their fishing boats on the night of Dec. 15.

"We keep praying that the weather will continue to be good so we can go on with the search and rescue operations," Infanta Mayor Ruperto Martinez told the INQUIRER.

Aside from the fishing village of Cato in Infanta, the missing fishermen also came from the villages of Bayambang and Fatima.

Cayetano said the search and rescue operations will "probably go on until Christmas." "As long as there are still missing fishermen that we have to look for, we will continue," he said. Gabriel Cardinosa, Inquirer Northern Luzon



E-mail: inquirer_cebu@inquirer.com.phEditor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Edralyn L. Benedicto


SEVERAL divers look over a wreckage of small plane that was placed undersea to serve as tourist attraction.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Mactan Island offers divers' paradise

By Jolene R. Bulambot
Lapu-lapu City

JUST HALF AN HOUR'S RIDE away from life's hustle and bustle in booming Cebu is Mactan Island, a growing attraction to many local and foreign divers who enjoy a superb sea adventure even without going any farther from the city.

One hardly expects that highly urbanized Cebu has a marine sanctuary with a lush underwater world to be explored, several meters from the island's shorelines. Until recently, it was not known, even among many Cebuanos, that the waters off Mactan can be an excellent diving spot.

With a total land area of about 7,000 hectares, the island is a gateway to the Visayas through the Cebu International Airport and is home to economic zones, five-star hotels and resorts, and exotic restaurants. The heroism of Lapu-lapu, who once ruled there, is immortalized in the historic Mactan Shrine.

Lapu-lapu City, the town of Cordova and the rest of Mactan are connected to the Cebu mainland by two bridges.

Tsuni Matsu, a Japanese diver for 12 years and frequent visitor to the Philippines, says he fell in love with Mactan since he arrived there four years ago. He has learned to love the country because of its lush marine ecology, exotic tropical fish and abundant rich corals, he says.

Unlike his hometown in Okinawa, Matsu says the Philippines has plenty of places to offer, especially Hilotongan Island (one of the islets off Mactan), where a fish sanctuary was established and hundreds of batfish are known to thrive.

"I have been a diver for more than a decade and I have been diving here in Mactan very of-

ten. It's one of my favorite spots. The water is clean, there is so much to see underwater even just a few feet away. My colleagues and I are enjoying the dive here, which is not really far from the city," he says.

At least 150 Japanese divers come to Cebu for recreational diving. Some are into underwater photography for postcard souvenirs, Matsu says.

Mactan is also one of the favorite dive spots of Korean tourists, says Charlie Shin, president of the Cebu Korean Community. More than 1,000 Koreans frequent the island every weekend, particularly Hilotongan, Olango and Nalusuan for a leisurely dive, snorkeling and jet skiing, Shin says.

The islands can be reached by commercial boats which charge a minimum fare of P28 per passenger, he adds.

Shin, who is also a dive instructor, says there is so much to see underwater, such as the stingray in Nalusuan Island, bat fish in Hilotongan, thresher sharks and dolphins in Olango, and different species of starfish and sea turtles.

At least seven dive spots and several beach resorts are co-owned and developed by Koreans, who have been captivated by the island's beauty.

"Twenty to 40 percent of our Korean tourists come to Mactan every weekend. That is more than 1,000 individuals all in all who visit this beautiful island on Saturdays and Sundays. They love to come here because of its proximity to the city and the beautiful marine life. They don't have to go farther to experience diving," Shin says.

Half of the Korean visitors are first-time divers who come to learn introductory diving for \$50 a session, he says. An advanced international diving course costs \$150 to \$500.

Expert Korean divers have been encouraging their countrymen in their homeland to come and explore the waters of Mactan and the nearby islands.

Best diving spots

"We promote Mactan as one of the best diving spots in your country aside from the islands of Moalboal, Malapascua and Balicasag in Bohol," Chin says.

Lt. Col. Ernesto Ravina, commanding officer of the In-shore Boat Battalion of the Philippine Marines, also boasts of the lush marine life in Cebu.

A diver for 24 years, Ravina says Mactan is one of the best dive spots in the country because of its superb water visibility, exotic corals and tropical fish.

One advantage it has over the other beautiful dive spots in Palawan and Batangas is convenience and proximity to the city, he adds.

"Cebuanos must be grateful people because you almost have everything. You have a booming economy and just a stone's throw are the beautiful dive spots here in Mactan," Ravina says, adding: "I have been diving in Australia, Europe and some parts of the United States and nothing beats the Philippines. Cebu is, of course, one of those beautiful dive spots because there is no season here."

"The water is very clear and you have all the tropical fish and the corals every diver wants to see. In Hilotongan, a diver could see hundreds and hundreds of batfish unlike in Batangas, you can see only 15 to 20. The coral formations here, they are all magnificent," the officer says.

But the growing attraction also exacts some toll. If not fully preserved, Mactan and its marine habitat risks extensive damage, warns Pepe Berido, chair of the City Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council in Lapu-lapu.

Berido says the municipal waters cover about 60,000 hectares. Alarmed by illegal fishing activities in some areas and garbage swept into the Hilotongan Channel, which hosts many marine sanctuaries, the council has intensified its awareness program.

At least six marine sanctuaries are found in Olango and Hilotongan. The council has proposed to establish five more in other areas, including Barangays Agus, Marigondon and Sabang.

The biggest sanctuary, Talima in Olango, stretches to 14 ha. It is home to parrot fish, groupers, mandarin and aquarium fish.

Berido says the sanctuaries have helped a lot in rehabilitating the marine habitat. "Because of our campaigns, we have reduced the number

of illegal fishing incidents in the area," he says.

Garbage problem

But Berido sees another problem—garbage brought by the current and irresponsible tourists.

"We are trying to preserve the ecotourism thrust of the island. We are picking up [the garbage] and the residents here have been cooperating with us already in preserving the waters of Mactan," he says.

Resorts and hotels in Mactan have been advocating a garbage-free Mactan, Emilito Bonghanoy, a dive shop owner, says. They have even urged the city council to pass a resolution mandating every resort, beach, hotel and dive shop to sponsor a sea cleanup regularly.

"It is our moral and social obligation to help. This is our business and we have the responsibility to help preserve nature's beauty and we will cooperate in whatever way we can to preserve our marine ecology," Bonghanoy says.

Nilo Nacua, a veteran dive instructor, blames the negligence of residents and tourists in proper garbage disposal. If they themselves are not keen on preserving the seas, an intensified awareness campaign will be fruitless, he warns.

"Several years back, you walk a few meters from the shoreline and you can see a lot of corals. But because of the negligence of many, we fear that the marine ecology in Mactan might no longer be here. We hope everyone will do his part to preserve our marine resources," he says.

On Dec. 8, about 50 local divers, including soldiers of the 7th Marine Battalion Landing Team, led a coastal cleanup.

Lt. Col. Martin Pinto, team commander, said the Marines felt that it was their responsibility to contribute by helping in the cleanup during their deployment to Cebu for the 12th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Summit. The event was reset for January due to bad weather, organizers said.

Pinto says garbage gathered from the Hilotongan Channel shows that more efforts should be made to encourage people to help protect the marine ecology in Mactan.

Mactan

- Cebu City
- Lapu-Lapu
- Mactan Island

Samar historical monument now a 'big flower vase'

By Ven S. Labro
Tacloban City

A MONUMENT DESIGNED to show Samar's history has become a "big flower vase."

Local historian Rosario Cabardo, a former head of a nongovernment organization based in Catbalogan town, says this happened to the 14-meter obelisk depicting heroic episodes of Samar's past when the provincial government undertook the rehabilitation of the Capitol in Catbalogan.

Cabardo laments that nothing has been done to restore the damaged obelisk a month after she wrote provincial officials to complain about the defacement of the historical site.

The four sides of the obelisk depicts four major events in Samar's history:

- The Balangiga Encounter in 1901 that saw local revolutionaries inflicting the "worst single defeat" of the Americans during the Philippine-American War.

- The Sumuroy Rebellion in Palapag in 1649 against the Spaniards.
- Arrival of the first Jesuit missionaries in Samar in 1596.
- Queen Isabella III carrying a Royal Decree of Aug. 11, 1841 declaring Samar a province.

The monument stands in front of the Capitol in Catbalogan, the present capital of Samar province and the former capital of the island-province of Samar before it was divided into Samar, Eastern Samar and Northern Samar provinces.

Although the scenes on the obelisk are still intact, the brass plaques in each of them are missing, Cabardo says.

Also nowhere at the lower base are the brass sculptures of early Samaritans depicted as "pintados" or tattooed people.

According to Cabardo, the missing items "have been replaced by a grotesque outcropping punctuated by flower vases in every corner."

In her letter dated Nov. 23 and addressed to Gov. Milagrosa Tan, who initiated the Capitol grounds rehabilitation

project, Vice Gov. Jesus Redaja and members of the provincial board, Cabardo says the obelisk has become "a big flower vase."

"This constitutes a defacement of an artwork and a mutilation of a historical landmark. Historical landmarks are not subjects to the whims and fancy of elected leaders to place a décor here and there. In fact, such historical landmarks have become part of our heritage and elected officials are supposed to protect its heritage from any vandalism, mutilation or damage," she adds.

The obelisk was constructed in 1997 when then Gov. Jose Roño declared August 11 Samar Day after careful deliberations of the Samar Historical Committee.

Cabardo, a member of the committee, said Roño commissioned artist Juan Sajid Imao to design and construct the monument to "remember the legacy of courage and determination left to us by men who fought for their beliefs and took their stand in the name of freedom."



THE CONTROVERSIAL obelisk in front of the capitol in Catbalogan, Samar.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



STA. Lucia's Norman Gonzales and Coca-Cola's Ali Peek dispute ball possession in their game yesterday.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

SPORTS

Tigers drub Realtors

By Musong R. Castillo

THE COCA-COLA TIGERS PLAYED HARD IN a game that meant little for them to score a 90-85 thrashing last night over Sta. Lucia that could prove bothersome for the Realtors in the fight for semifinal slots.

Starting guard John Arigo scored 16 of his 23 points in the final period, going 12-of-12 from the stripe at the Araneta Coliseum to lead a torrid finish by the Tigers, who closed out their elimination round with a 5-13 card.

For the Realtors, who paced the tournament way past the halfway stage, they would have to

Games on Christmas
(Araneta Coliseum)
2:30 p.m.—Air21 vs
San Miguel
5 p.m.—Barangay
Ginebra vs Talk 'N Text

More Sports
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A23 to A26

pray that Barangay Ginebra, already in the semifinals like San Miguel, turns back Talk 'N Text on Christmas to avoid complications of a playoff.

Coca-Cola and Sta. Lucia have been on opposite ends for most part of PBA Philippine Cup. Coca-Cola, which occupied the tail of the pack

until a long losing streak did newcomer Welcoat in, did not need to win last night's game as its chances of advancing to the quarterfinals depended on a sweep of the wildcard phase.

Should the Phone Pals win on Monday, and Purefoods loses to Alaska at press time, Sta. Lucia would be dragged into a playoff for the third automatic quarterfinal berth, with the Phone Pals drawing a bye due to a superior quotient.

The only way for the Realtors—who have lost six of their last eight games after going 8-2 in their first 10—to avoid the wildcard is for Ginebra to win in the 5 p.m. game on Monday.

Coca-Cola surprisingly took control from the get-go last night before pulling out the stops it needed in the stretch to eke out the victory.

From 75-all, Arigo scored in clusters, hitting a running jumper first before four straight free throws sandwiched an Ali Peek basket that made it 83-80 heading into the final 28.5 seconds.

Alaska later carved out a 96-92 overtime victory over defending champion Purefoods.

Willie Miller scored 25 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and issued eight assists in leading the Aces to their third straight win and an 8-10 tally for the eliminations. Purefoods fell to 10-8.

The scores:

COCA-COLA 90—Arigo 23, Peek 19, Miranda 17, Antonio 14, Caceres 9, Misolas 7, Gavino 1, Pacana 0, Yeo 0, Salangsang 0, Ferreria 0.

STA. LUCIA 85—Williams 26, Bughao 16, Mendoza 12, Espino 6, Gonzales 6, Durand 5, Isip 4, Aquino 4, Calil 3, Cabagnot 2, Callmag 1, Omolon 0.

Quarters: 19-15, 43-35, 58-57, 90-85.

Second Game

ALASKA 96—Miller 25, Carliso 15, Belasco 15, Dela Cruz 14, Ferriols 11, Laure 8, Singson 5, Juinio 3, Aban 0, Thoss 0.

PUREFOODS 92—J. Yap 27, Raymundo 14, Yee 10, Castillo 10, evangelista 9, Simon 8, Limpot 8, Pingris 6, Artadi 0, R. Yap 0.

Quarters: 20-24, 39-35, 55-57, 82-all, 96-92.

So, Dableo share lead

YOUTHFUL SENSATION WESLEY SO AGREED to a 15-move draw against fellow International Master Ronald Dableo in their Slav Defense encounter last night as they continued to share top spot after the eighth and penultimate round of the 2nd Rep. Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. Cup National Open Championship and Chess Challenge at the SM City in Manila.

With one round left to play today, both So and Dableo have 6.5 points apiece in the International Chess Federation (Fide)-rated tournament.

The 13-year-old So bested ex-Asian junior titlist GM Nelson Mariano II in the sixth round late Thursday, then halved the point with IM Darwin Laylo in the seventh round yesterday afternoon.

The 27-year-old Dableo, an AC2 officer from the Philippine Air Force, beat IM Oliver Dimakiling in the seventh round after 47 pushes of a Colle System Opening using the black pieces.

The game between top seed GM Mark Paragua and Laylo also ended in a 15-move draw of Sicilian Skirmish. They are tied for second with 6.0 points each.

"The draw is okay," said So, who's slated to compete in the Singapore Open late this month. "Anyway I'm still among the leaders after eight rounds and I'll possibly handle white in the last round tomorrow (today)."

Paragua drew with National Master John Paul Gomez in the sixth round then toppled IM Chito Garma after 45 moves of an Alekhine Defense in the seventh round.

Paragua is also scheduled to play in the Singapore Masters late this month.

Still being played at press time were the games between Dimakiling (5.0 points) and IM Petronio Roca (5.5); NM Rolando Nolte (5.0) and IM Richard Bitoon (5.0); FM Emmanuel Senador (5.0) and GM Nelson Mariano II (5.0) and IM Jayson Gonzales and FM Fernie Donguines (5.0).

Catherine Perena beat Paulo James Florendo and halved the point with Yves Ranola to grab the lead in the women's division with 4.5 points.

Salvador was only half a point behind with four points, followed by Loreshyl Cuizon and Jedara Docena with 3.5 points each. WIM Beverly Mendoza, Jan Jodilyn Fronda Christy Bernales, Kimberly Jane Cunanan and Daisy Rivera carry 3.0 points each.

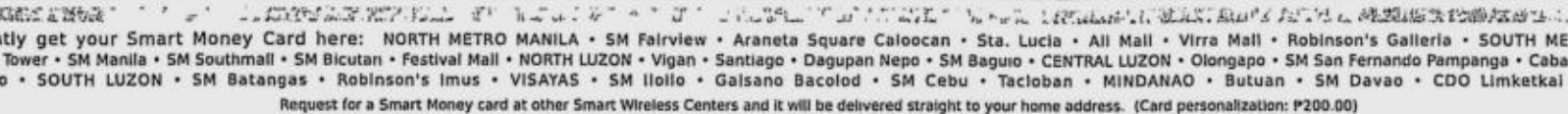
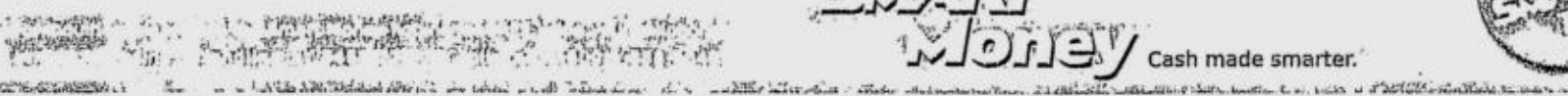
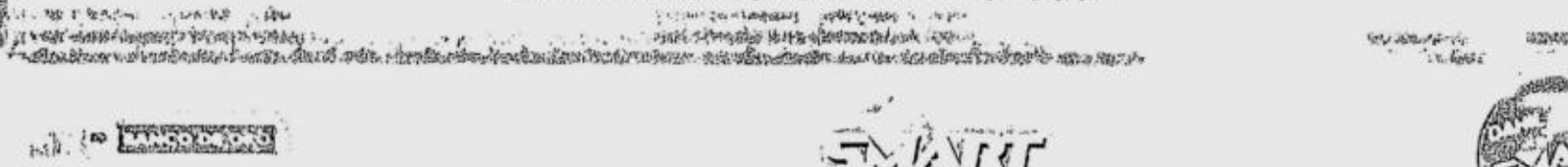
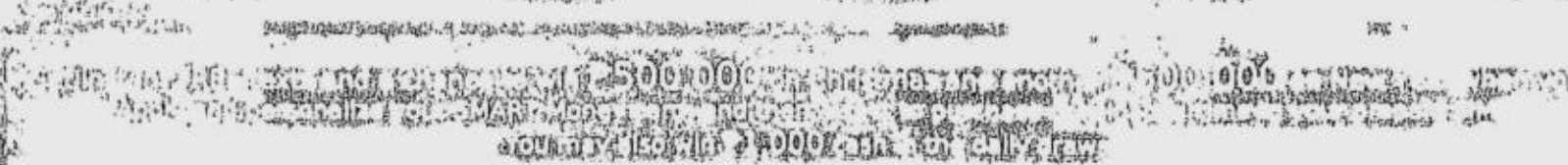
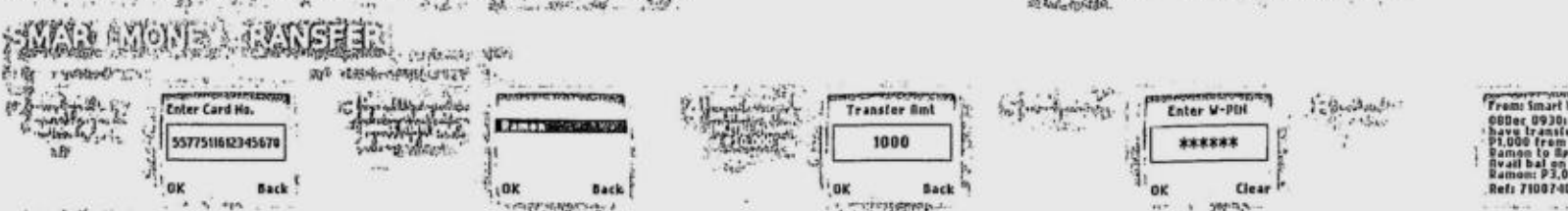
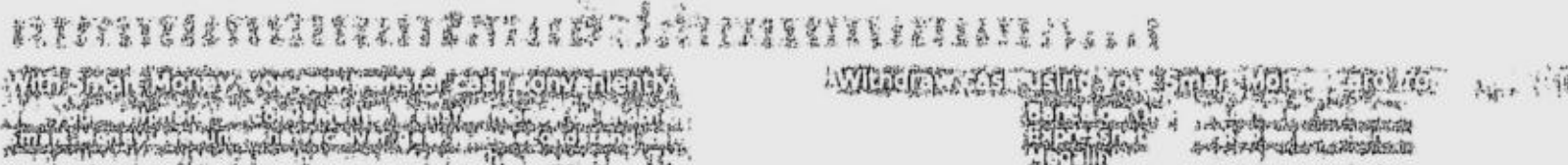
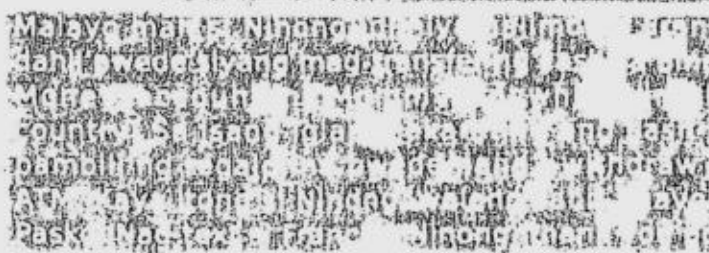
A total of P100,000 and the Pichay Cup await the champion in this six-day Fide (International Chess Federation)-rated tournament.

The top five male and top three females will represent the country in the Asian Zonals slated Jan. 10-19 in Vietnam. **NM Marlon Bernardino, contributor**



WESLEY SO

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NO TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS

Beside an unadorned Christmas lantern tacked to their shanty in a slum community in Quezon City, these two children hope Christmas, too, will come their way.

JOAN BONDOC

6 hurt in 18-vehicle pileup

Parañaque City collisions cause heavy traffic

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A CHAIN OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING 18 vehicles caused a massive gridlock before dawn yesterday that worsened the already heavy holiday traffic in Parañaque City.

Initial reports said six people were hurt.

PO2 Jose Aduccul, case investigator, said the injured were rushed to different hospitals in nearby cities. A San Juan de Dios Hospital (Pasay City) staff member told the INQUIRER that Dorothy Mendoza and George Murcia were brought to the hospital at 5:30 a.m. but were discharged a few hours later. Mendoza had a concussion while Murcia had lacerations. The other victims were identified as Daryl Calaliman, Nicole Madera, Ricardo Yunganco and Jacinto Rodenta.

Witnesses said a 10-wheeler truck, with plate No. TVM 404, was allegedly over-speeding along the Coastal Road when it rammed into a green Isuzu Crosswind at the corner of Roxas Boulevard and MIA Road at 4:45 a.m. The Isuzu was driven by Madera's mother, Cecilia. The impact caused the smaller vehicle to crash into a van, setting off a chain of collisions of private cars, passenger jeepneys and buses on Roxas Boulevard.

The truck driver, Jallie Palma, told police that his brakes malfunctioned as he reached the intersection. He said he swerved to the opposite lane to avoid the cars on the north-bound lane of Roxas Boulevard. Palma said there were fewer vehicles on the opposite lane.

However, witnesses told the police that Palma seemed to be beating the red light. They also alleged he was racing with another truck. The driver denied the allegations. Palma and Rodenta were on their way to Pampanga to deliver sacks of sugar they picked up in Batangas when the accident happened.

Untended box creates stir

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IF YOU SEE AN UNTENDED PACKAGE, Don't touch it. Move away and call the police.

"If it is indeed a bomb, moving it could activate its mechanism through pressure release," advised Makati City police chief Supt. Gilbert Cruz. "Don't shake it because it could be a liquid bomb."

Cruz added: "Don't destroy the package because that could also trigger an explosion, if it is a bomb. And don't get too close because it could be activated by remote control."

The advice was issued following a bomb scare at the city's Central Business District (CBD) Thursday afternoon. A box left in a building prompted watchmen to call bomb experts.

The box was found around 5:30 p.m. on the fifth floor of Salustiana D. Ty Tower on Perea Street. Maintenance crew and building security immediately alerted the Makati Special Weapons and Tactics Team, Cruz said.

The police chief said bomb experts moved the box to the ground floor where its contents could be checked. They found newspapers, garbage and some coins inside the container.

"People should immediately alert the police if they encounter an untended package so we can check if it's a hoax or a real bomb. This is for the safety of the public," Cruz told the INQUIRER.



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Park access their only Yule wish

By Tina G. Santos

THIS BAND OF ENVIRONMENTAL advocates has one wish this Christmas: For the city government of Manila to allow them to enter the Arroceros Forest Park.

"I hope they will finally heed our request to allow us to continue caring for the plants and trees inside the forest park," said Regina Paterno, president of Winner Foundation.

The environmentalists claimed they had been continuously denied access to the park even after the construction of a two-story teachers' building in the area was completed.

"In the spirit of Christmas, we're hoping that the city government finally allow us to get inside," Paterno told INQUIRER.

She lamented that they had repeatedly asked city officials to allow them inside so they could clean the area.

"We've been constantly calling them but we didn't get any response," she added. "Now they even placed a sign at the park's gate that says 'No ID, no entry.'"

The construction of the educational facility pushed through despite a case filed by the foundation against the city government which is pending in a Manila Regional Trial Court.

Winner has opposed the construction of the building inside the park which had been declared an archeological site, saying the move would result in the destruction of trees inside what it called Manila's "last lung."

The city government, however, said the agreement is not binding because it was never approved by the City Council.

A blue Christmas for families in hiding

By DJ Yap

FOR A FAMILY OF SEASONED farmers used to boisterous Yuletide gatherings in Malolos, Bulacan, this Christmas will be just another day in the cold, uninviting city.

Away from the company of friends and kin, the Garcias will spend the holidays cocooned in a house in Quezon City with no plan nor provisions for a traditional "noche buena" feast on Christmas Eve.

For them, the holidays ended three months ago when the head of the family, Artemio Principe, a militant peasant leader, became the alleged target of a military detachment in their native Niugan.

Since then, the Garcias have been on the run.

For three months, they flitted from one household to the next in undisclosed parts of Metro Manila, hidden from military forces they believe are targeting Artemio for his alleged links to the communist New People's Army.

But Artemio, a ranking officer of Aniban ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (the local chapter of Sanlakas), hardly fits the profile of a rebel fugitive.

The 53-year-old farmer is barely able to move the left side of his body after suffering from a stroke last year. Despite his condition, he forces himself to move with his family every two weeks to avoid detection.

"We can't stay in one place for very long; otherwise, we run the risk of being seen. We also have to consider the safety of our hosts," he said in an interview.

On Sept. 13, a group of heavily armed soldiers went to their

house and talked to the family to investigate an explosion in the area, he said.

But upon learning that some of them belonged to Sanlakas (two of Artemio's sons are also members), the men allegedly began harassing them, aiming their guns at their heads, and accusing them of being NPA guerrillas, Artemio said.

The harassment was nothing new to Artemio. The peasant leader had previous encounters with the military who had tried to make him confess to being an NPA member while threatening to kill him, he said.

Brutal

But in the Sept. 13 incident, the treatment was far more brutal, as the men also hurt other wife and grandchildren, he said.

"Before they left, they told us they'd be back, and we should expect to be killed by then," he told the INQUIRER. The next day, out of fear for their lives, Artemio packed his bags and left with his family for Manila.

The brush with the military forced the Garcia family to split up: In their Quezon City hideout, Artemio stays with his wife Nonina, four of their eight children, a daughter-in-law, and two grandsons.

Two other sons are living elsewhere in the metropolis, while another son and a daughter, who have families of their own, opted to stay behind in Bulacan, Artemio said.

"It's very hard for us. In the first few weeks after arriving in Manila, I couldn't sleep at all. It feels like we lost our home permanently," Artemio said in Filipino.

He continued: "We can't even call family members who were separated from us because the military might be able to trace us. So we just send them text messages every now and then."

"This is the first time we're spending Christmas apart," Artemio added.

Said his wife Nonina: "We used to spend Christmas together. I would prepare and sell 'suman' (rice cakes), and the sales would go to buy our Christmas meal."

"It was just a simple celebration, but we were happy. That's what mattered," she said.

Nonina said she had been trying to convince her husband to allow her to go home, even just by herself, to see the rest of the family again. "I miss them so much. I want to go home so badly," she said.

Adjusting to life in the city was also a challenge, she said. "Back home, I never ran out of things to do. I was always at work in the vegetable garden or around the house," Nonina said. "Here, I just sweep the floor in the morning, and have nothing else to do for the rest of the day. I'm a farmer. I just feel I don't belong in the city," she said.

Artemio said he was aware of his family's ordeal but added that there was nothing he could do. "Right now, hiding is the only way I can protect them," he said.

Lenny Dizon, based in Angeles City, Pampanga, and her 53-year-old mother Lolita know exactly what the Garcias are going through. For the past two months, the mother and daughter have sought sanctuary in the metropolis, where, like the Garcias, they have been moving from house to house to avoid soldiers they believe are out to get them.



WITH soldiers hot on their trail, members of this displaced family are forced to spend the holidays in fear—and in hiding—in an undisclosed place in Quezon City.

RAFFY LERMA

A ranking member of Aguman da reng Maglalautang Capampangan (the local chapter of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas), Lenny, 25, said she has been tagged as a communist organizer by the military.

Abducted

On Nov. 17, heavily armed men they believe to be Army soldiers abducted Lenny's brother, Romulos Robinos who had not been seen since then, she said.

Later, the soldiers, without officially admitting they had Robinos in custody, allegedly offered a "prisoner swap," where she would be exchanged for her brother, she said. Lenny did not take the bait. "I know they're not going to release him even if I

turned myself in. They want me to feel that I'm the cause of everything bad that's happened to our family. But I won't stop what I'm doing just because of that."

When she felt that she was being followed, she immediately left for Manila and stayed at a friend's house. Her mother later joined her. On Christmas Day, Lenny, who has a 5-year-old daughter, will be staying in an undisclosed place in Quezon City. "It's going to be a sad Christmas," she said.

Since going into hiding, Lenny has not seen nor talked to her daughter. "I sent her to live with a relative in a far and safe place," she said. "I don't dare visit or even call. I'm afraid they would be able to get to her."

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Although it's been said
many times, many ways

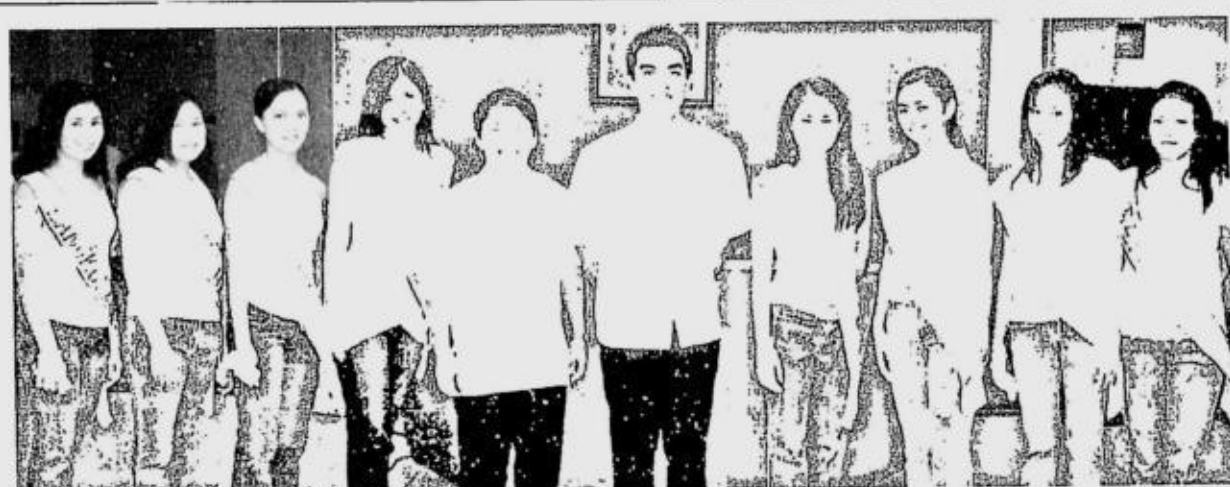
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MUTYA NG NAVOTAS 2007 BETS

Navotas Mayor Toby Tiangco (6th from left) and Vice Mayor PJ Javier pose with Mutya ng Navotas candidates for 2007. The pageant is one of the highlights of the town's founding anniversary on Jan. 16, 2007. Navotas will mark its 101st year on that day.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Cops now sidewalk vendors

METROBRIEFS

I MAY DISAGREE WITH SEN. PANFILO Lacson on a lot of issues, but I fully agree with him on his "unsolicited" advice (an advice to the police on matters of public interest should never be considered unsolicited) to send more cops to the streets.

The No. 1 rule of thumb in crime prevention is maximum uniformed police presence. The sight of uniformed cops in street corners or pounding the beat discourages would-be criminals.

Any criminologist will tell you that two factors make a crime: Need or greed and opportunity. There will always be need or greed because such is human nature. That is a constant.

But the variable in the commission of a crime is opportunity. If one is not given the opportunity, there will be no crime. Example: If you leave your wallet full of money on a table in a place full of people, you are inviting them to steal it. As long as you don't tempt a person to commit crime, a crime will not take place.

Director General Oscar Calderon, PNP chief, should heed his predecessor's advice since Lacson knows where-of he speaks. There were fewer petty crimes during Lacson's watch at the PNP because he deployed uniformed cops and even Marines in the streets.

(The police presence did not work in the case of the abduction-murder of PR man Bubby Dacer and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito; but then, that's another story altogether).

Calderon should field more uniformed men in the streets to fight crime. Right now, there are very few uniformed cops patrolling the streets, if there are any at all. Do you see patrol cars going around or parked in strategic

places in Metro Manila? You see them at police stations waiting for complainants.

If I were Calderon, I would buy bicycles for beat patrolmen so they can cover more and wider areas in a short time. Bicycles are much less expensive than patrol cars and easier to maintain. Besides, they will make policemen live longer because of the exercise they get by riding on bikes.

Here's a piece of advice to Calderon, and I wouldn't call this unsolicited: Don't make your

policemen sell sweepstakes tickets. Many cops have complained to this columnist that they were ordered to sell sweepstakes tickets by their superiors.

Director General Calderon, have you placed your policemen in the same category as sidewalk vendors?

What's wrong with the lavish Christmas party at the headquarters of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp)?

It's a tradition in all government and private offices to hold a Christmas party once a year.

If Brig. Gen. Delfin Bangit, Isafp chief, threw money like he was throwing candies at a party, that was his problem. So long as the money didn't come from an illegal source, what's wrong with Bangit throwing money during the party?

If he was drunk, what's wrong with shedding one's inhibitions once a year during a Christmas party?

That party was for Isafp personnel only. It was meant to boost their morale. It was probably Bangit's way of bonding with his subordinates.

ON TARGET



Ramon Tulfo

Ex-cop shot dead

A FORMER policeman of the Manila Police District (MPD) was shot dead by an unknown assailant in Manila late yesterday afternoon. MPD acting director Sr. Supt. Danilo Abarzo identified the victim as Egay Castro, a dismissed police sergeant. Castro's companion, known only as Lamar, sustained injuries as a result of the shooting incident. An initial investigation showed that the victim was shot at the back of the Century Park Hotel in Malate around 5:30 p.m. The gunman fled immediately after the incident.

Margaux C. Ortiz

Ban on 'watusi'

ALARMED by the danger posed by firecrackers like the popular "watusi" to its users, particularly small children, Caloocan Mayor Enrico Echiverri issued an order banning its sale in the city. Echiverri yesterday also ordered police to apprehend owners of stores selling "watusi" and other firecrackers that would harm users. The Department of Health recently declared watusi as among those classified as dangerous and urged the public not to purchase them.

Nancy C. Carvajal

Bazaar's last day

LAST-MINUTE shoppers have until today to look for gifts for their friends and loved ones this Christmas with the Sixth Noel Discovery Bazaar and Christmas Shopping Expo 2006 at the World Trade Center, Roxas Boulevard. The event is a joint undertaking of television giant GMA 7 and events organizer Cut Unlimited. The bazaar opens at 11 a.m. and closes at 8 p.m.

8 US Marines charged with murdering 24 Iraqis



A WOMAN cries after her shop was destroyed in a car bomb attack in Baghdad Dec. 18.

REUTERS

CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA—Eight Marines, including four officers, were charged in connection with the killings of 24 Iraqi civilians in the volatile town of Haditha, the most serious accusations leveled against US forces in Iraq in terms of the number of people killed.

The Nov. 19, 2005, rampage in the town in the Anbar province, the epicenter of the Sunni Arab-dominated insurgency, followed an insurgent roadside bombing hours earlier that claimed the life of one of their comrades, military authorities have said.

Staff Sgt. Frank D. Wuterich, 26, was charged Thursday with the unpremeditated murder of 12 people, and the murder of six people by ordering Marines about to enter a house "to shoot first and ask questions later," according to court papers. He faces the possibility of life in prison if convicted.

Three other enlisted men were charged with unpremeditated murder and other

charges, and also face up to life in prison.

Their battalion commander, Lt. Col. Jeffrey R. Chessani, 42, was charged with failing to accurately report and thoroughly investigate a possible violation and dereliction of duty. He could face dismissal and up to two years in prison.

Wuterich's attorney Neal Puckett said his client carried out the killings in accordance with his training.

"There's no question that innocent people died that day, but Staff Sergeant Wuterich believes, and I believe, they did everything, they were trained to do," Puckett said. "We look forward to the opportunity to bring the facts out."

Wuterich was also charged with making a false official statement and soliciting another sergeant to make false official statements.

Sgt. Sanick P. Dela Cruz, 24, was accused of the unpremeditated murders of five people and making a false official statement with intent to deceive.

Lance Cpl. Justin Sharratt, 22, was accused of the unpremeditated murder of three Iraqis.

Lance Cpl. Stephen B. Tatum, 25, was charged with the unpremeditated murders of two Iraqis, negligent homicide of four Iraqi civilians and a charge of assault upon two Iraqis.

In addition to Chessani, officers charged in connection with how the incident was investigated or reported included 1st Lt. Andrew A. Grayson, 25; Capt. Lucas McConnell, 31; and Capt. Randy W. Stone, 34, a military attorney.

The case sparked an international outcry when it was first reported, and is one of several instances of alleged US misconduct to have emerged from the Iraq war. This is the second time in six months that Pendleton officials have held a press conference to say they are charging their own in allegedly unlawful killings.

The Marines, who all belonged to the Camp Pendleton-based 3rd Battalion, 1st

Marine Regiment, have been under investigation since March after Time magazine, citing survivor accounts and human rights groups, reported that innocent people were killed.

The Iraqis were killed in the hours following a roadside bomb that rocked a Marine patrol, killing Lance Cpl. Miguel Terrazas, and injuring two others.

The Marine Corps, initially reported that 15 Iraqis died in a roadside bomb blast, and Marines killed eight insurgents in an ensuing fire fight. That account, however, has been widely discredited.

On Thursday, the Marines again said that insurgents fired guns after the blast. In the aftermath, five men were shot as they approached the scene in a taxi and others—including women and children—died as Marines went house to house in the area, clearing homes with grenades and gunfire.

Military officials would not address the question of motive.

AP

New York train tunnels seen vulnerable to attacks

NEW YORK—A SIGNIFICANT BOMB could flood commuter train tunnels between New York and New Jersey in a matter of hours, The New York Times reported on its web site early Friday.

The finding was among several outlined in a draft of a new analysis that suggest the PATH rail system, used by about 230,000 people in their daily commute between New York and New Jersey, is more vulnerable than previously thought.

The analysis, characterized as preliminary and continuing, was based on work by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, California, and the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. The newspaper said it was given a draft summary of the analysis by a government official.

The analysis showed that the PATH system's four tunnels are structurally more fragile than first thought. It suggests that a bomb small enough to be carried on a train could blow big enough holes to allow 1.2 gallons (4.54 liters) of water per minute to gush into a tunnel, flooding parts of the system within hours, the newspaper said.

A spokesperson for the Port Authority

of New York & New Jersey, which runs the PATH system, defended its safety.

"If we believed in any way that passengers were in danger, we'd close the system," spokesperson Marc La Vorna said. "That would happen immediately."

He would not answer specific questions about the analysis, according to the newspaper. But he said Port Authority police recently upped patrols and bag searches in the PATH system, and the agency's board voted last week to spend \$180 million to boost security on the rail line.

Aides to New Jersey Gov. Jon S. Corzine and New York Gov. George E. Pataki would not say whether the governors had seen the new analysis, the newspaper said. A spokesperson for New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg would not comment on it.

A spokesperson for the federal Department of Homeland Security said he was unable to determine whether the agency had been notified of it.

Concerns have long been raised about potential terrorist attacks on tunnels connecting to New York City. In July, authorities said they had thwarted a suicide-bomb plot involving the PATH tunnels. AP

WORLD BRIEFS

Hispanics seek moratorium on work raids

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS—US Hispanic groups and activists on Thursday called for a moratorium on workplace raids to round up illegal immigrants, saying they were reminiscent of Nazi crackdowns on Jews in the 1930s. They accused the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement of "racial profiling," or selective enforcement against Hispanics, for arresting 1,300 workers on immigration violations in Dec. 12 raids at meatpacking plants in six states. "We are demanding an end to these immigration raids, where they are targeting brown faces. That is major, major racial profiling, and that cannot be tolerated," said Rosa Rosales, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, at a news conference. The government crackdown follows months of political debate about illegal immigrants that culminated in a new law authorizing, among other things, construction of a 700-mile wall along several stretches of the US-Mexican border. Many of those arrested in the Dec. 12 raids, all at Swift & Co. plants, were from Latin American countries. Reuters

'Stay the course' named top catch phrase of 2006

LOS ANGELES—"Stay the course," the phrase dropped by the Bush administration as it searched for a new policy in Iraq, was declared the catch phrase of the year on Thursday by language use group Global Language Monitor. "It makes number one because it was declared inoperative," said Global Language monitor President Paul JJ Payack. In second place was the ill-fated book title, "If I Did It" by O.J. Simpson. The idea of O.J. Simpson telling how he would have killed his ex-wife and her friend if he had actually murdered them outraged so many people that it was withdrawn. But the phrase was an immediate winner in the language. Simpson was found not guilty of the murders in a criminal trial but held liable the deaths in a civil proceeding. In third place was a series of emotion icons used in E-mail and text messages: "# -)" which Payack said meant "wasted." In fourth was "Airline Pulp," a Chinese/English hybrid way of describing food served aboard an airliner. Serial Texter was fifth, denoting the widespread use of text messages among the world's youth. The top catch phrases for 2005 were Out of the Mainstream, used to describe the ideology of any political opponent, and bird flu or Avian flu. Reuters

French PM questioned for 17 hours in scandal case

PARIS—French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin was questioned for 17 hours until early on Friday by magistrates investigating an apparent smear campaign in 2004 against conservative presidential frontrunner Nicolas Sarkozy. Villepin was heard as a witness, not a suspect, in the so-called Clearstream affair that revolves around faked bank accounts and hushed-up government probes. "As far as I was concerned, I was very happy to be able to provide my testimony in this affair where for many months I have been the victim of calumny and lies," Villepin told reporters. Villepin's critics say he sought to benefit from the scandal at the expense of Sarkozy, his long-standing rival within the political right. The prime minister denies the accusation. Reuters

N. Korean nuclear talks headed for deadlocked end

BEIJING—SIX-NATION TALKS AIMED at ending North Korea's nuclear program appeared set to end Friday in deadlock, with politicians and diplomats trading accusations over who was to blame for the failure.

Officials and delegates involved in the talks said the forum had broken down over North Korea's insistence that US financial sanctions against it be lifted before substantive discussions began on Pyongyang giving up its nuclear arms.

Following its first-ever atomic test on Oct. 9, an emboldened North Korea unveiled a long list of other demands on Monday at the opening of the talks, after boycotting the negotiations for the previous 13 months.

But the United States refused to buckle, maintaining the sanctions, which were imposed for alleged money laundering and counterfeiting, were a law enforcement is-

sue and not related to North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reiterated in Washington Thursday that the sanctions—which led to the freezing of North Korean funds in a Macau bank—were "clearly in another lane" to the six-party talks.

"We cannot be diverted from what we need to do in the six-party talks, which is to have the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula," Rice said. The talks involve China, North and South Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia.

The chief US envoy to the talks, Christopher Hill, suggested in Beijing on Friday that North Korea was to blame for the imbroglio after the United States put forward its proposals to end the crisis earlier in the week.

"I think what they need to do is get serious about the issues that have made them such problems," Hill told reporters. AFP



ONE OF 2006'S ENDURING IMAGES—People look at a hanging installation titled 'Expressions' by artist Sophie Caves at the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum in Glasgow, Scotland July 11.

REUTERS

Old nemeses—war, AIDS, nukes—bedeviled the world in '06

VIENNA, AUSTRIA—ROCKETS LIT UP the skies over Iraq and Lebanon and bloodied the streets below. Iran and North Korea both grew bolder in their nuclear brinksmanship. And a thwarted plot to blow up jetliners rattled nerves on both sides of the Atlantic.

In 2006, a world weary of war grappled with a new slew of security threats, struggled to contain violence and misery in Sudan, and witnessed the US president weakened at the ballot box.

It now seems vulnerable on other fronts, too: Voracious demand for energy from China and India raised concerns about sustainable resources and global climate change, and Vladimir Putin's newly confident Russia translated its oil wealth into new—some say dangerous—clout.

Iraq casualties

Civilian and military casualties mounted in Iraq, where Saddam Hussein was convicted of mass murder and sentenced to hang. With Iraq in political disarray, and the US body count approaching 3,000, a disillusioned American electorate handed US President George W. Bush a rebuke by putting Democrats in charge of Congress. US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld resigned.

Iraq's shadow over the US presidential campaign darkened and deepened when a bipartisan commission said Bush's policy "is not working" and suggested withdrawing most American combat troops by early 2008.

The West's standoff with Iran over its suspect nuclear program rose another notch: The US and its closest allies prepared to call for a UN Security Council vote on sanctions as a defiant Tehran raced to bring its first nuclear power plant on line in late 2007.

The stakes also increased dramatically with North Korea, which tested a nuclear bomb in October. Pyongyang agreed to resume long-stalled international disarmament talks, but much of Asia—well within striking distance—remained wary.

War in Lebanon

Hezbollah militants in Lebanon fought a 34-day war with Israel that dealt another setback to Middle East peace hopes. Lebanon's Western-backed government was then engulfed in political turmoil.

Ehud Olmert became Israel's prime minister after Ariel Sharon was felled by

a stroke and quickly faced multiple crises: The militant group Hamas' election victory in the Palestinian territories, the Lebanon fighting, Iran's nuclear ambitions and its president's calls to wipe Israel off the map.

Death of Zarqawi

A US airstrike eliminated one threat by killing Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq. But NATO forces in southern Afghanistan faced another: a resurgent Taliban waging a relentless war of roadside bombings and ambushes.

Terrorists struck again, blowing up crowded trains and killing more than 200 commuters in Mumbai, India. British authorities said they narrowly thwarted a plot to rival the 9/11 attacks by downing multiple jets over the Atlantic—a sobering disclosure that swiftly led to tough new restrictions on the contents of carry-on luggage.

Cartoons in European newspapers depicting the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist triggered violent protests in the Islamic world. The firestorm flared anew when Pope Benedict XVI quoted a Byzantine emperor who characterized some of Muhammad's teachings as "evil and inhuman." The pope later expressed regret that his speech caused offense.

The 25-nation European Union agreed to take in two more eastern countries in 2007—ex-communist Bulgaria and Romania—but cooled on mostly Muslim Turkey's membership bid.

Maps of the Balkans became obsolete overnight when tiny Montenegro gained independence, completing the long and tumultuous breakup of Yugoslavia. At the United Nations, South Korea's Ban Ki-moon was elected to take over Jan. 1 from Kofi Annan as the first Asian to lead the world body in 35 years.

Bird flu

Fears of a killer pandemic briefly swept the globe when four Turkish children succumbed to bird flu, but the virus seemed to vanish as quickly as it surfaced. Not so with AIDS, an old nemesis: The United Nations said 39.5 million people were living with HIV and nearly 3 million died in 2006 alone.

Other disasters struck: An earthquake killed 5,800 people and destroyed 135,000 homes in Java, Indonesia, and scientists sounded fresh warnings about global warming.

Violence worsened in Sudan's west-

ern Darfur region, where fighting between rebels and government forces has killed more than 200,000 people. The UN, desperate to avoid a full-blown humanitarian disaster, approved a 20,000-strong peacekeeping force, but Sudan blocked its deployment.

A decade of fighting by rebels trying to turn Nepal into a communist state ended with a ceasefire and peace talks, and ETA, Spain's armed Basque separatist group, laid down its arms.

Sri Lanka clashes

But war flared anew in Sri Lanka—where at least 3,500 people died in clashes between the military and Tamil Tiger rebels—and Somalia's prime minister warned that the rise of Islamic militants made fresh conflict in the restive Horn of Africa "inevitable."

In several Latin American countries it was a good year for the left. Re-elected were firebrand Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, fresh from denouncing Bush before the UN as "the devil," and moderate Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Former Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega returned to power in Nicaragua, and Evo Morales became Bolivia's first indigenous Indian president.

But in Mexico, conservative Felipe Calderon won a razor-thin victory over a leftist rival in an election judged honest by foreign observers yet challenged by prolonged leftist protest rallies.

Cubans prepared for a historic changing of the guard after 80-year-old leader Fidel Castro underwent intestinal surgery and temporarily ceded power.

Congo managed to elect a president, raising fragile hope that the arena of Africa's worst fighting in the 1990s was finally finding peace.

Spy poisoning

Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian agent and fierce Kremlin critic, was fatally poisoned in London with radioactive polonium-210. Litvinenko blamed Putin, a leader increasingly beset by accusations that his government is resurrecting Soviet-era strong-arm tactics.

Even when the world played together at the 2006 Turin Olympics, it stumbled: Doping scandals marred the games.

Those who looked to the heavens for a little cosmic relief were disappointed. Earth's leading astronomers, intent on downsizing the solar system, stripped poor, pitiful Pluto of its longtime status as a planet.

AP

The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

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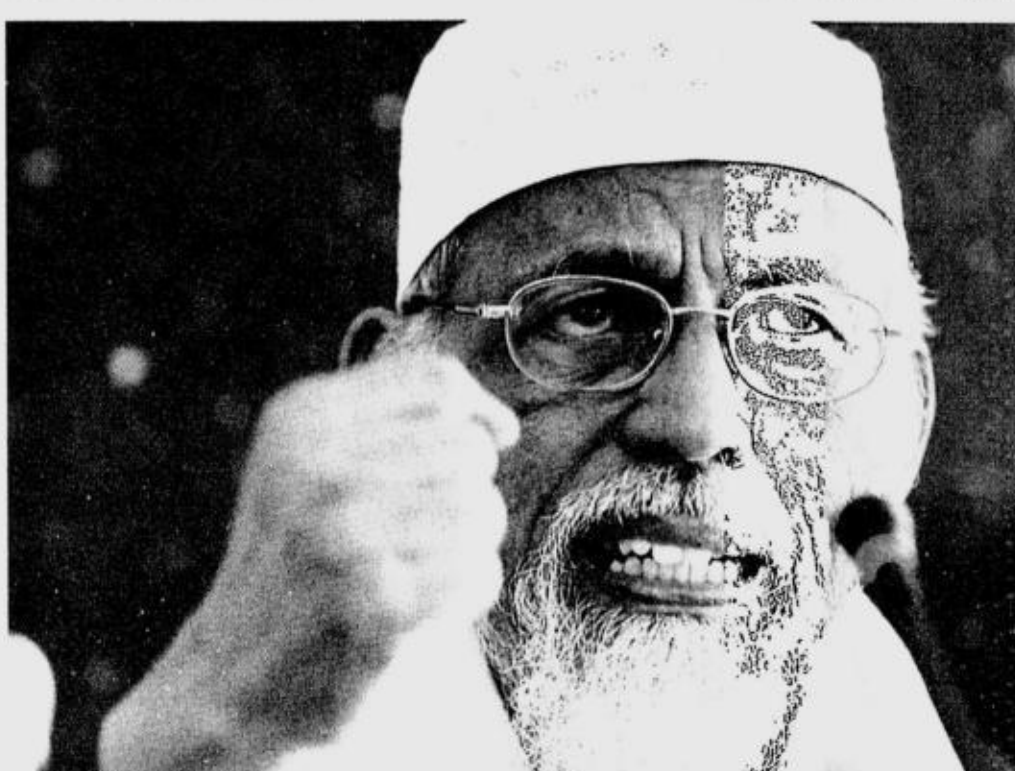
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HARDLINE Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir delivering a speech Aug. 16 to activists of the Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia who are volunteering to fight against Israel, at a mosque in Jakarta. AFP

Court overturns conviction of Bashir in Bali bombings

JAKARTA, INDONESIA—INDONESIA HAS OVERTURNED THE terror conviction of Islamic cleric Abu Bakar Bashir after he served 2 1/2 years in prison for conspiracy in the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people.

The surprise acquittal by the Supreme Court could present a major setback for prosecutors attempting to convict terrorism suspects in custody.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said he was upset for the families of the 88 Australian victims but was powerless to help. Australia, along with the United States, publicly accused the aging cleric of being a top leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, an al-Qaida-linked Southeast Asian terror group.

"Of course it is the court system of another country and we can't change that," Howard told the Nine Network television. "But it doesn't stop us feeling upset, and I know there will be a feeling of anger on the part on the parents and loved ones, and I am feeling for them this morning very much."

Howard noted, however, that those who carried out the bombings and those who were directly responsible for them have been convicted.

Bashir, 69, who was released from prison in June, has long claimed that the government in the world's most populous Muslim nation succumbed to pressure from the West when it arrested him soon after the Bali nightclub attacks.

Bashir's son, Abdurrahmin, said his father had received word of the verdict.

"Thank God the Supreme Court has finally revealed the final truth," he said by telephone from

Bashir's hometown on Java island. "He is praying now to say thanks to God that his prayers have been accepted."

Brian Deegan, an Australian lawyer whose 21-year-old son Josh died in the attack, said he had given up trying to understand Indonesian justice.

"I've steered myself to the point that I will never understand the Indonesian judicial system," Deegan told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. radio. "I lost faith a long time ago in the entire process."

Thursday's ruling was in response to an appeal filed during Bashir's imprisonment.

Supreme Court Chief Judge German Hoediar-toto told reporters he had decided to quash the conspiracy conviction following testimony from 30 witnesses, but gave no more details. A written verdict will likely be made public soon.

The 2002 Bali bombings that killed 202 people, mostly foreign tourists, were the first in a string of attacks in Indonesia targeting Western interests, with 2003 and 2004 blasts at the Australian Embassy and the J.W. Marriott Hotel and triple suicide bombings on Bali last year.

Bashir has always denied any wrongdoing, but admits having known several Southeast Asian militants in the 1980s and 1990s who went to Afghanistan and trained there at al-Qaida-run camps. AP

Dreaming of a politically correct Christmas

By Jocelyne Zablit

WASHINGTON—IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR again. Jostling throngs of bargain-hunting shoppers, office parties—and what's become an annual political debate about the celebration of Christmas.

From flaps over Christmas trees to the decision to scrap a traditional nativity play in favor of reggae-style carols, the Christian world is awash with examples of political correctness this season.

Even Pope Benedict XVI has waded into the controversy, speaking out in support of Christmas creches that were threatened with banishment from public view in predominantly Catholic Italy.

In Britain the popular press is spreading plenty of Christmas jeer against politically correct dogooders—who are spoiling the fun for everyone, they say.

One school has banned Christmas cards in class, a court has restricted the number of lights one homeowner can have on his property and a school is offering halal turkey and chicken for its Christmas meal following pressure from many Muslim parents.

In the United States, where nativity scenes and displays with religious themes in public places are pretty much a thing of the past, what critics call "the war on Christmas" has subsided this year although several incidents have made headlines.

One involved the removal of 14 plastic Christmas trees at Seattle-Tacoma airport, in the western state of Washington, following a complaint from a local rabbi who said the decorations should include a menorah to mark Hanukkah.

The airport restored the trees after a public outcry—and after the rabbi said he would not file a threatened lawsuit.

Another incident concerned a high school choir ordered to abruptly stop singing Christmas

carols at a holiday ice-skating show featuring Olympic medalist Sasha Cohen, out of concern over her partly Jewish heritage.

Officials at the rink in California approached the Rubidoux High School Madrigals just as they launched into "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and requested the troupe to immediately stop singing. Cohen later said she was stunned by the flap and never made a request to silence the singers.

Newspapers have also carried stories about children at a school being told not to use the word Christmas when writing to US troops in Iraq; the American Civil Liberties Union filing suit over some Tennessee school children singing "Away in a Manger" and "Joy to the World" at a Christmas event; attempts to change Christmas school vacations into winter breaks; and an overzealous employee at a retirement home clipping the wings of an angel on a Christmas tree so as to remove any religious connotations.

Major stores meanwhile appear in a quandary over proper etiquette.

The world's largest retailer Wal-Mart last year required its employees to say "happy holidays," fearing the traditional "Merry Christmas" might offend customers.

This year, following criticism by some Christian groups that called for boycotts, it has reversed course and is going with Christmas in a big way.

Stores that have chosen to remain politically correct are exposing themselves to the wrath of Christian groups like the Liberty Counsel, which is advertising a "naughty and nice" list featuring retailers that say Christmas and others that are sticking with "holiday."

"It's ridiculous that Americans have to think twice about whether it's okay to say Merry Christmas," said Joe Infranco, senior counsel at the Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian legal aid group. AFP

METRO

Citizen's Call

Our City of Affections and Disaffections
is made up of stories.
Your stories. Tell us all about it.

- Did a signage make your day?
- Garbage dumped on your street unmake your day?
- Street diggings forever on the street where you live?
- Are you up in arms against the demolition of an ancestral house?
- Awed by a little-known barangay project with a big positive impact in your community?
- Got stuck in potholes?
- Fed up with cussing and feuding neighbors?
- Is there an everyday role model in your neighborhood?
- Delightful/dreadful finds on your way to work?

JUST TEXT SMS: ccall name/age/location <message>

MMS: <insert photo> ccall name/age/location <caption/message>

0918-8985566

PS

Please don't send tips on criminal activities and scams. Call the police.

INQUIRER



WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Anthony won't appeal 15-game suspension /A25

SPORTS

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Alcano off to sizzling 2-0 start in Super Cup

REIGNING WORLD POOL CHAMPION Ronnie Alcano started strongly in the 2006 Power-In Super Cup, hurdling Rodney Morris of the United States and Thomas Engert of Germany, respectively, in Taipei.

Alcano came from behind to beat 2006 IPT World 8-ball runner-up Morris, 7-4, and 2005 Challenge of Champions titlist Engert, 7-2.

Morris took the first three racks, but the lanky, 34-year-old cue artist from Calamba City clustered six racks to thwart Morris in the race-to-7, winner's-break format.

The top four from each of the two groups qualify to the knockout stage.

According to the Onthehill-asia website, Alcano did not use his soft break that had led him to the world crown at the expense of Ralf Souquet of Germany, 17-11, in the finals. Alcano instead used the power-break due to the tough situations in the side pockets.

Souquet won his first three matches over 2004 WPC champ Alex Pagulayan, 7-5, RP pool legend Jose "Amang" Parica, 7-3, and defending champion and former two-time Asian

Games champion Yang-Ching-shun, 7-6.

Yang was on his way to victory when he made an empty break in the 14th frame, allowing Souquet to clean up.

Last year, the 27-year-old Yang, from Kaohsiung, pocketed the top prize of \$20,000 by edging compatriot and 2004 WPC runner-up Chang Pe-wei, 11-8, in the finals.

"I know that the Super Cup is a very tough event," said Alcano. "I prepared hard for this."

Pagulayan was up by one rack, 5-4, but failed to pocket an easy shot for the 8 ball in

the 10th frame, allowing Souquet to tie the count and eventually win the match.

Morris suffered his second straight defeat against 2005 WPC champion Wu Chia-ching of Taiwan, 4-7, while Engert yielded to Chang Jung-lin of Taiwan, 7-2, in the opening round.

Chang also toted a 2-0 win-loss card after edging Chao Fong-pang, 7-6.

Pagulayan bounced back in contention by crushing Lee Kun-fang, 7-3, while Parica stayed alive by nipping British star Raj Hundal, 7-4.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor



ALCANO: Over two pool "heavies"



BIG BREAK: Jay Bayron pars the 10th. ROMY HOMILLADA

Asistio, Bayron forge title duel; V'roman-Ardina up

By Musong R. Castillo

STA. ROSA, LAGUNA—YOUNG top seed Tonlits Asistio continued to crush his foes in his side of the draw, while No. 2 Jay Bayron churned out another high-wire act to seal a clash for the 2006 Philippine Amateur golf championship.

Asistio, the former national pool member, dismantled Korean Young Ho-sim with clinical precision in a 4-and-3 victory before Bayron nipped Mark Fernando, 1-up, at the windswept The Country Club here.

Former RP Ladies' Amateur champion Carmellette Villaroman, a veteran who was also cut from the national pool this year, bagged a finals berth in the women's division with a 4-and-3 victory over Bambee dela Paz.

She clashes with world junior champion Dottie Ardina for the crown won by Frances Bondad in Bacolod last year. The pocket-sized Ardina posted a 2-and-1 win over Malaysian Ainil Abu Bakar.

Asistio had not had a match that went through the full route of regulation over a course where he had trained for most of the past two years before being unceremoniously dropped from the RP pool.

Bayron, meanwhile, had never had it tougher. And crucial breaks again decided the outcome of his match against the 23-year-old Fernando, who trains under the auspices of the Philippine Amateur Golf Development Foundation.

The Bayron-Fernando match was tight all the way, with the lead changing hands several times in the first eight holes.

Bayron, a Canlubang mainstay like his foe, got the first of two breaks that ultimately decided the outcome.

Playing his second shot against the wind on the uphill ninth hole, Bayron struck an iron too thin but saw the

ball take a low flight all the way to the edge of the green, stopping within 15 feet of the pin. He knocked down the putt for a 1-up lead.

Fernando, who later won third place by tearing Young apart, 5 and 4, fell two holes down after a Bayron birdie on the 11th. But he chopped the deficit down to a hole after a bird on the 14th.

"That was my toughest match so far," Bayron told the INQUIRER in Filipino.

Bayron nailed a curling 10-foot putt for par on the 15th to halve the hole and then watched Fernando's four-foot uphill putt for birdie lip out on the next hole.

In the afternoon match for third place, Fernando, who bundled out Asian Games bronze medal winner Michael Bibat, 1-up, on Thursday, made a product of the National Caddies Open bag third place in this tournament for the second straight year.

At the Marapara in Bacolod last year, Mario Labajo finished third behind Juvic Pagunsan and Siva Chandhran of Malaysia.

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COJUANGCO

Olympic body to get tough on erring NSAs

By June Navarro

WITHOUT SENDING A WARNING, THE Philippine Olympic Committee has made it known it was ready to get tough on erring member associations.

POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco has urged the executive board of the Olympic body to form a set of guidelines that would govern the election and membership of the national sports associations.

"I asked the board to come up with rules and guidelines on the election of NSA officials," said

Cojuangco yesterday during the Scoop sa Kawayan.

Cojuangco graced the affair with Philippine Sports Commission chair William "Butch" Ramirez, the medal winners in the just-concluded Doha Asian Games and NSA officials of boxing, wushu, karatedo and billiards.

"Without a definite rule, problems will surely arise (in the election process of the NSAs)," Cojuangco added.

A case in point, he said, was the election of new Table Tennis Association of the Philippines officials last weekend whose legitimacy is being

questioned by Tatap president Victor Valbuena.

The Tatap board of representatives elected a new set of board of trustees attended by 13 of 18 regional representatives in an attempt to dislodge Valbuena.

The conduct of that controversial election had reportedly resulted in a near-brawl involving three officials during the POC executive board meeting last Wednesday.

Athletics chief Go Teng Kok reportedly managed to duck a punch thrown in his direction, after similarly avoiding being splashed with a glass of water at the Wack Wack Golf and Coun-

try Club in Mandaluyong.

"There should be an advanced notice of at least two months notifying the schedule of the election and the list of voters," said Cojuangco.

Asked about the development on basketball, Cojuangco reiterated that the POC would rather focus on other sports than dwell on the subject.

"I know how important basketball is in this country. But how about the other sports?" said Cojuangco. "The leaders of an NSA should always work harmoniously for the good of the association and the success of its athletes."

Arellano comes to the fore in PBL wars

By Jasmine W. Payo

MARCY ARELLANO WAS NOT SATISFIED HAVING ENDED THE YEAR on top of his game. The spitfire guard made sure his team remained on top as well.

Consistently impressive, Arellano has been one of Henkel Sista's main offensive weapons in the PBL Silver Cup.

"He had been taught well," said Sista coach Caloy Garcia of Arellano, a 5-foot-10 standout from the University of the East.

"The challenge now for him is to play the point (guard position). He's starting to pick up."

But the transition looked easy for Arellano, who has been named Player of the Week along with Harbour Centre's Reed Juntilla.

Last Tuesday, Arellano pumped in 15 points—including six straight in the final two minutes—to lift the Super Sealers to a 77-69 triumph over the TeleTech Titans.

Three-way logjam

With the victory, the Super Sealers broke away from a three-way logjam for second to grab the solo lead with a 6-2 slate.

Juntilla also earned the weekly honor for fueling the Port Master's

resurgent campaign midway in the elimination round.

An ever-confident Juntilla begged for the last shot—and nailed it—to lead the Port Masters to a 75-73 escape over Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala last Wednesday.

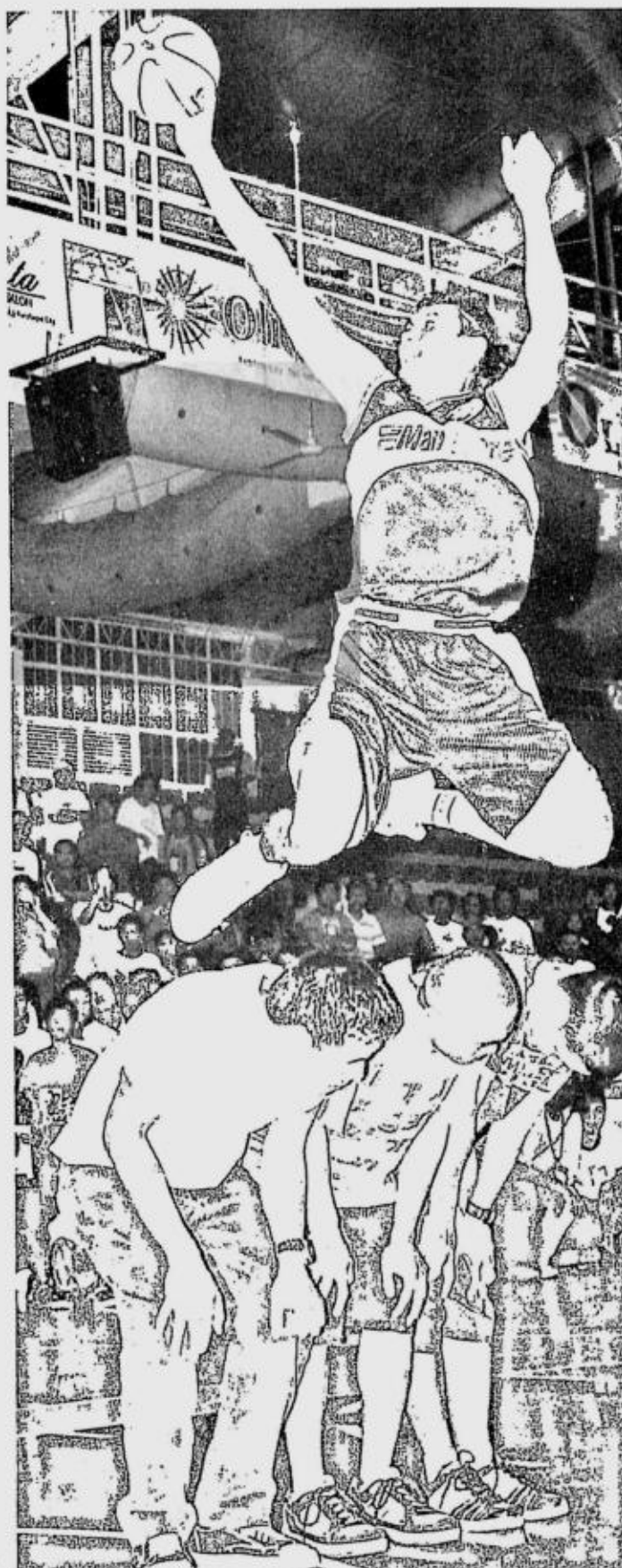
Game-winning jumper

"He asked for that play so I gave it to him," said Harbour Centre coach Jorge Gallent after Juntilla buried the game-winning jumper with 2.3 seconds remaining.

"I know he can do it. Thankfully, he did not frustrate us."

The 6-foot-1 guard averaged 21 points in back-to-back wins that pushed Harbour Centre to a three-way tie with TeleTech and Toyota Otis at 4-3.

Arellano and Juntilla, who clinched the citation for the first time, joined the ranks of past winners Kelvin Gregorio of Henkel Sista, Mark Borboran and Jason Castro of Hapee-PCU and Elmer Espiritu and JR Quiñahan of Mail and More.



ELMER Espiritu soars during the slam dunk contest.

ERIK ARAZAS

BEIJING OR BUST Plan laid out soon for Olympic quest

By June Navarro

SPORTS LEADERS WILL NOT wait for the New Year to draw up the blueprint of the country's gold-medal quest in the Olympics.

Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco yesterday said the Olympic body and the Philippine Sports Commission would map out the strategy for the 2008 Beijing Olympiad next week.

In fact, Cojuangco stressed he would skip the holidays "to get the job done."

"We'll sit down and make a definite plan for every individual and every sport which has a high probability of winning medals in the Olympics," said Cojuangco.

Cojuangco and PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez will draw up the calendar of the two-year program for the global sport event and start identifying the "super athletes" who will be dispatched to specialize in training camps overseas.

"There are sports we know we're capable of competing world-class," said Cojuangco. "But first, we have to identify the athletes because if we don't have the materials, it doesn't mean anything."

Athletes from diving, archery, fencing, gymnastics and combat sports boxing, taekwondo and karate will be given preferential treatment after performing beyond expectations in the just-concluded Asian Games in Doha, Qatar.

The POC and the PSC want to rush things and come up with the Olympic gold-medal strategy before next month's Olympic festival, one of the grassroots programs lined up.

"It will be a busy Christmas for us," said Ramirez. "By January and February, we will begin sending scouts to countries where our athletes will train for the Olympics."



SHOO-IN: Boxer Joan Tipon

The national archers and taekwondo-jins will be whisked off to Korea, the divers and fencers to China, the karatekas to Italy and the gymnasts to Moscow, Russia.

The preparation of the identified athletes, whose only break from foreign training will be the Southeast Asian Games in Thailand next year, will be bankrolled by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo.

Meanwhile, the POC will look into the complaints by disgruntled officials and athletes about the associations of karatedo, football, traditional boat race and canoe-kayak.

Cojuangco has tasked POC chair Robert Aventajado to form a special committee to investigate the complaints and present the committee's findings to the general assembly next month.

The POC will determine why karatedo failed to bring along a referee in the Doha Asiad Games that put the chances of winning medals in peril.

The football association will also be questioned for its failure to form a solid team while canoe-kayak and traditional boat race associations are clamoring for each other's legitimacy.

Baseball officials will also be scrutinized after a humiliating finish in the Asiad.

Pinoy underdog vies for IBF 105-lb. crown

By Salven L. Lagumbay

JAKARTA—UNDERDOG BENJIE SOROLLA of the Philippines challenges International Boxing Federation (IBF) minimumweight champion Muhammad Rachman at the 5,000-capacity Tennis Indoor Senayan Stadium here today.

The 25-year-old Sorolla, handpicked to challenge Rachman, said there are very few fans who expect him to win but vowed a monumental upset.

"I never stopped training after my last fight," Sorolla told media here during a courtesy call to the head of Indonesian Olympic Committee.

"I only rested for two weeks, then I was back in the gym again. I might end this fight in five rounds."

Rachman came in at 104.5 lbs. while Sorolla tipped the scales at 103.5 lbs. in yesterday's weigh-in.

Rachman (60-5-5, 30 KOs), who outpointed Sorolla in their first fight four years ago, also predicted a knockout win.

"I respect you, Sorolla, but I will only give you five rounds at most," said Rachman during the weigh-in.

Sorolla (24-10-3, 8 KOs) said he had very little time to prepare for that previous fight.

Sorolla's trainer, Rolando "Sonny" Sangalang, said his ward has logged in 123 rounds in two months, taking on former world title contender Juanito Rubillar, Ryan Bito and Celso Danggod.

Supervising today's fight is Australian Ray Wheatley, referee is another Australian John Wright. Judges for the fight include a Thai, and an official from Indonesia and the Philippines.

Promoter Soeryo Goeritno said today's event also features the following match-ups: Kirino Armase vs Tony Areman, Victor Mausol vs Abi Metyaman, Wido Paes vs Moses Makarawe.

Fulfilled wushu star hangs on for a final gold campaign

By Marc Anthony Reyes

IF WUSHU STAR RENE CATALAN HAD HIS WAY, his sparkling gold medal in the Doha Asian Games would have been his swan song.

Prior to his Asiad triumph, the 28-year-old Catalan, an Ilonggo, had already won a world championship.

He said it: he would hang up his fighting gears after his Qatar conquest.

However, he has been prevailed upon by wushu president Julian Camacho, who asked Catalan to stay at least for the 24th Southeast Asian Games in Bangkok next year.

"He really wanted to retire but I talked to him and made him change his mind," Camacho told the INQUIRER yesterday. "I think he is still strong enough to win in Bangkok."

Wushu tried but failed to make it to the regular Olympic calendar in Beijing in 2008. However, Camacho said the sport will be featured among the "special events" in the Beijing Summer Olympics.

"It's not a demonstration sport, because demonstration sports, if played in the Olympics three times,

will make it to the regular roster," said Camacho.

Camacho said wushu lobbied hard to get into the regular events, but the International Olympic Committee executive commission thumbed it down during their meeting in Mexico.

The IOC maintained that the 28 Olympic events are fixed, and if one sport would be accommodated, one other sport must be taken off the list, Camacho said.

Just the same, the Philippines will field athletes in the qualifying event for the Olympics special event in November.

Camacho said he will be ready to parade the next batch of wushu champs, led by 20-year-old Benjie Rivera, who had earlier been considered to take Catalan's place in the Asiad lineup.

Catalan is part of the champion squad that amassed 11 gold medals during the Philippine edition of the SEAG last year. He also has the distinction of winning the first wushu Asiad gold for the country. Teammate Edward Felayang brought home a silver.

The Philippines won two silver medals and three bronzes in the 2002 Busan Asian Games.



ONE MORE TIME: Asiad gold medalist Rene Catalan.

RTU batters rule Cebuana softball invitational

THE RIZAL TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY (RTU) men's team exacted revenge over Rosario-Pasig, 5-1, to rule the 1st Cebuana Lhuillier Fast-Pitch Softball Invitational Tournament held recently at the Rosario Softball Arena in Pasig City.

Jerome Bacarissas scored a run in the 1st inning to trigger the rampage of the favored RTU squad, which suffered its only loss in the tournament during a semifinals

game against Rosario-Pasig. RTU completed the romp by posting four more runs in the 3rd and 5th innings.

In the battle for third place, the RP Blu Girls blanked the University of the Philippines women's team, 7-0. Nimpa Baral handed the Blu Girls their first run with Nelia Lara at bat, after which the Nationals frustrated UP's attempts to break the ice.

The other teams that took part were the

University of Santo Tomas women's team, Adamson University women's team and the International Little League Association of Manila (ILLAM)-Big League Girls team.

The Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines (Asaphil), headed by its president, Jean Henri Lhuillier, organized the tournament as part of the Blu Girls' preparation for the Asia-Oceania Olympic Qualifier in Taiwan set February 2007.

"By facing our top collegiate men's teams, we have upped the ante for our Blu Girls' training," said Lhuillier. "Japan is leading in Asia because of their rigorous training and international exposure."

Among the projects Asaphil has lined up for next year are the National Open and an inter-collegiate tournament. Lhuillier said these projects are meant to increase the ballers' chances of winning internationally.

Injured left foot forces Pierce out

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS—BOSTON Celtics captain Paul Pierce is expected to miss the next two or three weeks of the National Basketball Association season with an injured left foot, the club announced on Thursday.

An MRI exam revealed the stress reaction, a swelling on bone and soft tissue.

The 29-year-old forward suffered the injury last Friday against Denver but has been playing despite pain for the past five days.

Pierce did not train on Thursday and was wearing a protective boot.

In 24 games, the playmaker has averaged a team-high 26.6 points plus 7.4 rebounds and a team-best 4.3 assists a game.

Pierce scored a team-high 27 points in Boston's 96-95 home loss to Golden State on Wednesday. The Celtics are 10-14 and the only club in the NBA with a better road record (6-5) than home mark (4-9).

AFP

Ankle sprain hobbles Dirk

DALLAS—DALLAS Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki is questionable for Friday's game against the Los Angeles Clippers because of a sprained left ankle.

Nowitzki had to be helped off the court after he got hurt late in the first quarter of Wednesday's 103-95 victory at Seattle. X-rays were negative.

There was no availability with the Mavericks on Thursday, when they traveled home from Seattle. But the team issued a release that said no MRI was planned for Nowitzki.

Nowitzki had six points before he was hurt following a missed free throw by teammate Jerry Stackhouse.



LEBRON James (left) of the Cavaliers gets fouled by Carlos Delfino of the Pistons while going to the basket.

Pistons silence Cavs; Wizards trample Kings

NEW YORK—THE DETROIT PISTONS proved too strong for LeBron James and his Cleveland Cavaliers in their first meeting since last season's Eastern Conference playoff series, easing to an 87-71 road win on Thursday.

Chauncey Billups had 17 points and 10 assists and Tayshaun Prince added 16 points and eight rebounds to lead six Detroit players in double-figure scoring as the Pistons opened up a 2 1/2 game lead on the Cavaliers in the Central Division standings.

The division rivals met in a thrilling seven-game East semifinal series in May, won by Detroit in the decider.

However, the Pistons (16-8) ended any drama in this one, pulling away in the fourth quarter.

Billups snapped a stretch of poor shooting to sink his first three shots of the fourth quarter to allow

the Pistons to open up a 13-point lead with less than nine minutes left.

Detroit out-scored Cleveland (14-11) 30-16 in the final quarter and played stifling defense most of the night, holding the Cavaliers to just 34 percent shooting from the field.

Antonio McDyess had a season-high 11 points and 11 rebounds for the Pistons, who have the best record in the Eastern Conference. Detroit shot 44 percent from the field.

James led the Cavaliers with 26 points and 10 rebounds and also had five assists, including going 8-for-8 from the foul line. But the rest of the Cavs were just 7-for-15 from the line and 2-for-11 from three-point range.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas added 16 points for the Cavaliers, who are now 11-3 at home this season.

Antawn Jamison had 33 points and 13 rebounds as the Washington Wizards beat the Sacramento Kings, 126-119.

Gilbert Arenas added 30 points for the Wizards, who scored 73 points in the second half. Kevin Martin scored 40 points in a losing cause for the Kings.

Reuters

NBA ON TV Today

9 a.m.—Philadelphia vs. Boston (replays at 4 p.m. and 9:30 p.m.)

Nascar hits speed bump, looks into foreign races

NEW YORK—NASCAR, whose rapid growth over the last two decades made it an American sporting phenomenon, hit a speed bump this past season yet changes could bring a new buzz to the US stock car circuit.

Television ratings were down and attendance slipped for the slice of Americana born in the rural Southeast, where bootleggers and farmers raced their souped-up cars for bragging rights and spending cash.

Now NASCAR, which stands for National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, is shifting gears.

It is changing television partners in the hope of bonding better with its fans. It is excited about the arrival of charismatic former Formula One driver Juan Pablo Montoya and the Hispanic audience he is expected to draw. It is gearing up for enlivened competition thanks to the addition of Toyota cars.

"I think any time something has grown at a fast rate there are always going to be times that the pace slows down," four-times NASCAR champion Jeff Gordon told Reuters in a telephone interview. "You just hope that it doesn't plateau and reach its peak."

That is not to say the sport's economic indi-

cators are soft.

A new eight-year television pact that begins with the 2007 season is estimated at nearly \$4.5 billion involving several networks and reuniting the circuit with ABC and its cable sports giant ESPN. Big corporate sponsors still line up to sponsor teams.

Foreign Market

Gordon said opening up international connections could get NASCAR on an even faster track.

"You've got Toyota coming on next year which is going to open up the foreign car market. It's possible that that could take it further outside the US."

"I hope one day that it does, if we get more foreign car manufacturers that could be a part of it. I think it could be huge."

A Toyota driven by Josh Wise was fastest in a three-day test meeting this month among a record 75 drivers at Daytona International Speedway with a top lap of 181.925 mph (292.778 kph).

Gordon said seven-times Formula One grand prix winner Montoya of Colombia, 31, who has been brought over by the Chip Ganassi team, would bring a big lift.



GERMAN RUNNER: Grit Breuer comes in as the last runner of the SC Magdeburg club's women's 4x100 meters relay team during the German Athletics Championships in Braunschweig, Germany, in file photo.

AP

Anthony won't appeal 15-game suspension

DENVER—CARMELLO Anthony won't appeal his 15-game suspension for his role in the New York Knicks brawl last weekend, according to USA Today and ESPN.com reports.

"It is Melo's desire to focus on the issue at hand, not be a distraction to his team and focus on coming back as the best teammate he can be," Bill Duffy, CEO of BDA Sports, the agency that represents Anthony, told USA Today in Thursday's editions. "He's accepting full responsibility. That's a mature response."

Duffy and Anthony's agent, Calvin Andrews, didn't return calls from The Associated Press on Thursday.

Union director Billy Hunter,



ANTHONY

who could not confirm Anthony's decision not to appeal, told the AP he spoke with Anthony on Wednesday night.

"He wanted to go (with the case), but at the same time he talked about trying to put this thing behind him," Hunter

said.

Anthony was scheduled to return to the Nuggets lineup Jan. 20 at Houston. But a blizzard that postponed Denver's Wednesday game with Phoenix, might push back Anthony's return to a Jan. 22 home game against Memphis.

As of Thursday afternoon, the league had yet to receive a letter of appeal from J.R. Smith, who's serving a 10-game suspension.

SPORTSWATCH

Roligon 5-cock derby stakes P1.2M

SMALLTIME COCKERS AND BACKYARD BREEDERS GIRD UP FOR THE NEW Year 5-cock derby on Jan. 2, 4 and 6 at the Roligon Mega Cockpit. Hosts Ronnie Lacina and Dr. Boy Tuazon pegged the entry fee at P7,700. The derby offers P1.2 million in guaranteed prize for a minimum bet of P5,000. Elimination rounds (2-cock) are set on Jan. 2 and 4, while the championship round rages on Jan. 6. The event comes on the heels of the 251-entry Apordabol cockfest recently, where newcomer Rey Calbe emerged as overall fastest win champion and drove home a Toyota Avanza. For reservation of cockhouses, call 851-2275, 833-1638 or 0918-9001411 (Lacina).

Makati cockfest fifth round today

THE BLOCKBUSTER P3M PAMASKONG SALPUKAN 6-COCK DERBY RESUMES at Makati Coliseum today with the fifth elimination round. The first of 75 fights gets underway at 5 p.m. Participants who will score three wins will share the P100,000 day prize, said promoters Lito Orillaza, Rudy Salud and William Co of WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. Out of 157 cockers and breeders who have seen action, 16 reached the finals unbeaten with three wins each. The latest three-pointers from Monday's round were Tony Lasala, Efrén Canlas, Gov. Ito Ynares and SPDR entry. The last batch of participants will clash on Wednesday. All qualifiers will clash on Dec. 30. Call 896-3545 and 895-6475 (Joan or Stephanie).

94 fights slated at Las Pinas

WITH 94 FIGHTS ON TAP, THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS 4-COCK DERBY OF LAS Pinas Coliseum starts at 5 p.m. today with P500,000 at stake. Gunning for the title are Paeng Arlaga, Gerry Ramos, Pepe and Raymond Burgos, Sonny Lagon, Angel Torres, Mayor Nene Aguilar, Baldo Perez, Ruffy Clave, Eric dela Rosa, Butch Olan, Danny Alejo, Boy de Roca, Louie Cua, sabong idol Patrick Antonio and Emil Chua. Coliseum manager Alex Tobias and RC Sayaman, derby hosts, said entry fee is P8,800. Meanwhile, the LPC New Year 4-cock derby follows on Dec. 30, with Mayor Nene Aguilar as host. A P500,000 cash prize plus two refrigerators await the winners. Contact 873-1040 and 874-3910 or 0926-7450375 (Julius).

Record-breaking slugger Sosa training for Major League Baseball comeback

SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC—Sammy Sosa began training Thursday in hopes of returning to the major leagues.

"I feel like I did when I was a rookie," Sosa told The Associated Press. "I have a lot of spirit and a desire to return. I think I can play three or four more years in the form I am now."

Sosa hit the ball out of the park 15 times while training at a field in San Pedro de Macoris that is operated by the Japanese Cental League's Hiroshima Carp.

The 38-year-old slugger said he had received calls from teams interested in signing him but declined to reveal their names.

He has not played since 2005 with the Baltimore Orioles, when he hit .221 with 14 home runs and 45 RBIs.

More offers

Sosa feels that baseball has turned its back on him, calling it a "blow" to not have received more offers to come back last sea-



SAMMY Sosa

son.

Washington was the only team that publicly expressed interest in the Dominican's services, offering him a non-guaranteed \$500,000 contract that Sosa rejected.

"I want the chance and I believe one is going to appear. This time I will accept an offer like the one with the Nationals because I want to get back to the majors," he said.

Most valuable player

Sosa, who won the National League's most valuable player award, played 17 seasons with the Texas Rangers, Chicago White Sox and Cubs, and Baltimore.

A year away from the game wouldn't shake him, he said.

"Ted Williams went to war and lost a couple years. More recently, Barry Bonds stayed away for more than a year and came back, and the same happened with Frank Thomas because of injuries," he said.

AP

Serena, Venus did not violate contract—jury

WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA—SERENA and Venus Williams did not violate a contract with two promoters by not appearing at a 2001 tennis "Battle of the Sexes" exhibition match, a jury ruled here on Thursday.

Promoters said they lost millions of dollars because the WTA Tour stars did not play.

But the six jurors agreed with the Williams' attorney's argument that their father, Richard Williams, was not

empowered to represent them when he agreed to the deal for their appearance.

As a result the breach of contract claim was denied. The first trial in the case was annulled a year ago. The second trial lasted one month.

Williams signed a deal for his daughters to appear in the "Battle of the Sexes" event in Fort Lauderdale. Promoters claim they lost \$9 million because the event was cancelled.

"The bottom line is there was no

damages. They didn't prove any damages. They didn't sustain any damages," Richard Williams' lawyer Jan Michael Morris told reporters. "6-0, 6-0, 6-0, that's all we cared about, the big zero."

At the heart of the lawsuit was a written promise Richard Williams signed for the appearance of his daughters in the 2001 exhibition. The event never took place and the plaintiffs said the Williams sisters reneged on their promise.

The Williams' lawyer maintained that what the promoters' lawyers called a "valid and binding contract" was simply a letter of introduction to the private company that handles the sisters' business.

The so-called contract, the lawyer told the jury, was signed by Richard Williams and not by his daughters, who are in the habit of signing their own contracts and were unaware of any deal their father may have struck.

AFP



Venus (left) and Serena Williams smile at each other during a news conference after the verdict in their breach of contract trial.

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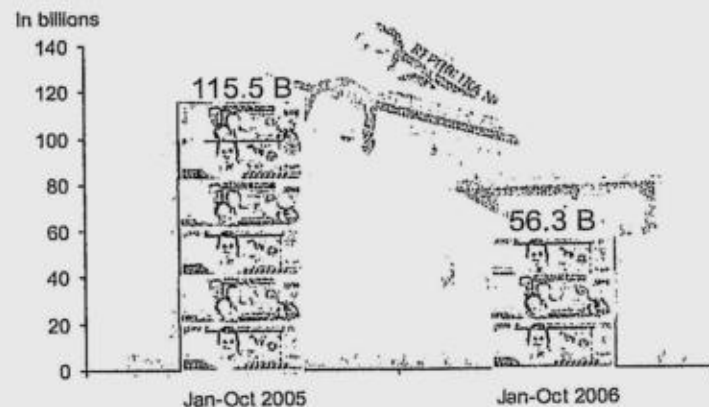
World Bank OKs \$250-M loan to RP

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter in our nation's life

Government deficit for first ten months down

The country's budget deficit reached P56.3 billion from January to October this year, only 45 percent of this year's P125-billion full-year target and less than half of the P115.5-billion deficit incurred in the same period last year.



Source: Inquirer Reports
Kate Pedrosa Inquirer Research

Quick-disbursing loan is first since 1998

By Doris C. Dumlaog

THE WORLD BANK YESTERDAY APPROVED A \$250-MILLION program loan to support the Philippines' fiscal policy and governance reforms, the first time in eight years that the country qualified to avail itself of such development policy loan (DPL).

In a statement, the World Bank said its board of directors had approved the disbursement of \$250 million under the "First Development Policy Loan" in a single tranche after loan signing, as all policy actions supported by the loan had already been completed at this time.

The first DPL lays the groundwork for supporting deeper reforms in the areas of fiscal consolidation, governance and the fiduciary environment, investment climate, and social policy. If adequate reforms progress continues, the World Bank said it was willing to provide subsequent DPLs on a yearly basis.

The World Bank provides the quick-dis-

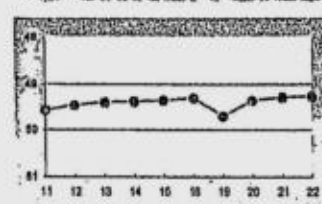
bursing DPLs on the basis of good economic management and policy reforms. The loan is released in a single tranche to finance regular budget expenditures of the government.

"We are very happy to support the Philippines with policy-based lending, for the first time since 1998," said World Bank country director Joachim von Amsberg.

"The series of DPLs recognizes the improvements in public finance and provides support for continuing sound fiscal policies for the years to come. Further fiscal improvements will come from more transparent and equitable collection of taxes and more effective

WORLD/B2

CURRENCIES

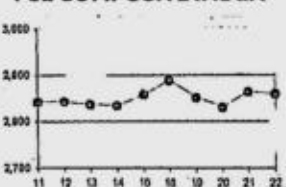


DECEMBER
P 49.28 = \$ 1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 22, 2006

MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close lower

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.14-PERCENT lower yesterday on profit-taking ahead of the long Christmas holiday weekend, dealers said.

They said year-end window-dressing tempered the main index's fall but turnover was lighter than usual ahead of the four-day weekend with many market players already off for the Christmas holidays.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index fell 4.20 points to 2,858.31 after moving between 2,853.42 and 2,872.85.

The broader all-shares index added 1.19 points at 1,800.88.

Losers outpaced gainers 67 to 30, while 56 stocks ended unchanged.

SHARES/B2

9 oil blocks, 14 coal areas up for bidding

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY IS OFFERING nine petroleum blocks, 14 coal prospects and three geothermal sites to prospective investors for development under the 2006 Philippine Energy Contracting Round (PECR 2006).

On the sidelines of the PECR 2006 launch yesterday, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said at least one investor had expressed interest to bid for

each of the nine oil and gas areas that were placed on the auction block.

"We are intensifying our search for new energy resources to meet new energy demand. Through the PECR, we will be selecting applicants who can demonstrate a good understanding of the resource potential, and who will carry out the best work program that will effectively map and develop these indigenous energy potential," he said.

Energy Undersecretary Guillermo

Balce said interested bidders could submit their proposals within the first quarter of next year, with awards to take place by June.

For petroleum exploration, the DOE has identified nine areas spanning 71,357.3 square kilometers for development, including Cagayan, Central Luzon, two blocks in Mindoro-Cuyo, three blocks in East Palawan, Visayan Basin and Agusan-Davao.

Last year, only four oil and gas areas

were offered to prospective investors, two of which had yet to be formally awarded as these were still awaiting Malacañang's nod.

For coal, the DOE is offering 14 sites with a total resource potential of 421 million metric tons (MT) for exploration, development and production.

Balce said each site would be composed of three blocks, with each block spanning 1,000 hectares.

9 OIL/B2

Drier babies sleep better with Huggies leak-lock system.

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One and Done



B2

DMCI bags Boracay, BPO projects

Contracts for hotel resort, call center worth P1.6B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez
and Christine A. Gaylican

DM CONSUNJI INC., A WHOLLY owned subsidiary of construction giant DMCI Holdings Inc., has bagged two contracts worth roughly P1.6 billion to build a facility for business process outsourcing firms for Robinsons Land Corp. (RLC) and a hotel on Boracay island for Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts Inc.

"Construction has picked up, but the private sector has limited activities," said Herbert Consunji, DMCI Holdings vice president. "There are a few clients who engage in construction on a regular basis. But it's a promising year. We are back on the radar screen."

Of the total amount, P1.3 billion will be used to build the 7-story Shangri-La Resort & Spa on Boracay, while P297 million will go to the construction of Robinsons Cybergate Tower 3 on Pioneer Street in Mandaluyong City.

Shangri-La Boracay Resorts consists of nine units of 5-story guest rooms and 37 luxury villas. It has a floor area of approximately 56,200 square meters.

The hotel will also cater to recreational needs through an outdoor plunge pool or jacuzzi, treetop restaurants, all-day dining coffee shop with outdoor seating, a specialty restaurant, meeting and banquet facilities on the island, ballroom and function rooms, and an outdoor wedding pavilion.

The resort will also feature a "Chi" spa which is a separate village complex. The spa village facilities include suites for half or full day use, a yoga pavilion, spa pool and recreational facilities such as outdoor tennis court, swimming pool and marine center with diving facilities.

The Shangri-La Boracay Resorts will start construction this month and is expected to be completed by May 2008.

On the other hand, Cybergate 3 is a 26-story office building.

The lower ground all the way to the fifth floor will be utilized as parking areas. The remaining floors are allotted for office space.

Construction will start in January 2007. It is expected to be completed by February 2008.

Also, DMCI said it would withdraw from a joint venture with Vulcan Industrial & Mining Corp. (VIMC) by paying its share of a P40-million loan which was recently secured from Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co., VIMC executive vice president Patrick Caoille said.

The loan was supposed to fund the joint venture, which entails the supply of gravel to DMCI from Vulcan's quarry in Montalban.

DMCI owns 49 percent of the joint venture project, with the Vulcan group holding the balance of 51 percent.

Caoille said DMCI has committed to pay some P18 to P19 million of the said loan. The two have been partners since 1991.

FLI secures SEC nod to register 8.1B shares

THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE Commission (SEC) has approved the plan of Filinvest Land Inc. (FLI) to register 8.14 billion shares to cover a share offer to the public.

Through the offer, FLI hopes to raise fresh funds for its future projects.

Of the total shares registered with the corporate watchdog, 3.7 billion will consist of new or primary shares, some 3.63 billion will make up secondary or shares now owned by existing shareholders, while 809.85 million will cover a "greenshoe option," or an offer of additional shares.

Selling shareholders Filinvest Alabang Inc., and the Government of Singapore Investment Corp. Pte. Ltd. will raise net proceeds worth P6,017 billion from the planned offer after deducting certain expenses, according to documents filed with the SEC.

FLI in 2007 will set aside P3.6 billion in capital expenditures for key projects. It remains bullish on prospects for the real estate sector in the coming years.

Sources said the capital expenditures next year would come from FLI's primary offer of 3.7 billion new shares in February. The total offer, without the greenshoe option, consists of 7.3 billion shares, of which 3.628 billion shares will come from Filinvest Alabang Inc. and the Government of Singapore Investment Corp. (GIC).

FLI currently owns 37 percent of FLI, while GIC holds 9.3 percent. Filinvest Development Corp., the holding firm of the Gotianun family, owns 35 percent.

Of FLI's total capex next year, P2 billion will be used for land development, P1.5 billion for the construction of Northgate Cyberpark in Alabang, and P100 million for mall refurbishments and the PBCom building on Ayala Avenue.

In its disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange, FLI said it will offer up to 95 percent of the total 7.3 billion share offer to foreign investors, while the rest will be allocated to domestic investors.

FLI has tapped UBS Investment bank to be the international underwriter. ATR Kim Eng Capital Partners Inc. will be the local underwriter.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez



MACROASIA CORPORATION

MacroAsia Corp. bested 37 other entries to win the 4th Management Association of the Philippines' Best Annual Report Award. MacroAsia president Joseph Chua (center) is shown receiving the trophy from Fe Barin of the Securities and Exchange Commission. They are joined by (from left) Francis Lim of the Philippine Stock Exchange, and Evelyn Singon of MAP. MacroAsia's 2005 annual report—"Growing Stronger and Getting Bigger"—was cited for its compliance and disclosure, corporate governance and user-friendly features. MacroAsia is engaged in mining, catering, ground handling and engineering and maintenance services to local and international airlines.

NTC approves 'indefinite' promos

By Riza T. Olchondra

IN LINE WITH A SENATE Committee's thrust to further lower telecommunication service rates in the country, the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has approved rate cuts on some telco services for an indefinite period, an official of the regulatory agency said.

The Senate committee on public services, chaired by Sen. Joker Arroyo, has said it appreciates the continued lowering of call and

text rates, but it will now like to see more long-term cuts to benefit more consumers.

In line with this goal, the NTC has approved the new "Pa-Talk" service rates for Smart Communications and Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel).

Under the Pa-Talk service, for which the two telcos did not set a deadline, subscribers can make one call for up to two minutes at only P5.50 per call after downloading Pa-Talk denomination from any SmartLoad or Piltel retailer.

To make the call, the subscriber must have load credits of at least P5.50.

The subscriber can then dial a designated prefix to be announced by Smart and Piltel, plus the mobile number of the party the caller wants to reach.

The Pa-Talk service rates do not cover international calls.

The NTC also approved the new rates on condition that the service will only be available for Smart to Smart and Piltel to Piltel calls, the official said.

Shares ...

From page B1

There were 2.5 billion shares traded worth P2.3 billion.

"The market is winding down after a bullish year," said Jose Vistan of AB Capital Securities Inc. "It's typical during this time of the year with no new leads and fund managers are already on a vacation mode."

"Fund managers opted for a cash position because of the long weekend rather than hold on to stocks," said Rommel Macapagal of Westlink Global Equities. AFP

9 oil ...

From page B1

These sites are located in Quezon, Negros Occidental, Cebu, Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Sur, Davao Oriental and Zamboanga Sibugay.

During last year's PECC, no bidder qualified to get an operating contract for any of the seven areas offered.

"While coal demand is increasing, majority of our coal supply is still imported. With the country's total coal resource potential estimated at 2.36 billion MT and the attractive fiscal incentives being offered under the PECC, we hope to see increased exploration and development of our indigenous coal resource," Lotilla said.

For the geothermal sector, the DOE has pinpointed three areas for exploration, development and direct utilization for power generation and other geothermal applications.

These areas, with a combined potential of around 100 megawatts (MW), are located in Mabini in Batangas, Biliran in Biliran Province, and Amacan in Compostela Valley.

The Philippines is currently the world's second biggest geothermal power producer with a total installed capacity of 1,931 MW.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 22, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	47.5	47.5	46.5	47	1,837,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	62	62.5	61.5	62.5	2,481,500
China Banking Corp.	695	695	695	695	3,000
Citizens Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	4,000
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.48	0.48	0.47	0.47	2,290,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	84.5	84.5	84	84	1,312,700
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51	51	50.5	51	1,312,700
Philippine National Bank	44	44	43.5	44	85,200
Savings Bank	48	48	48	48	2,000
Rural Comm. Banking Corp.	26	26	25.5	25.5	260,000
Security Bank Corp.	66	66	66	66	148,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	49	49	49	49	1,400
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Air Kimgang Fin. Corp.	1.96	1.96	1.96	1.96	23,000
Bankard Inc.	0.78	0.78	0.75	0.75	160,000
Citiseconline.com Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.5	2,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	2,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	1650	1650	1650	1650	350
Investment Corp.	1.54	1.54	1.54	1.54	4,277,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
PNOC Energy Dev. Corp.	4.5	4.55	4.45	4.45	54,204,000
First Gen Corp.	55	55	54	54.5	1,362,600
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	62.5	63.5	62.5	63	1,013,600
Manila Electric Co. A	54	54	53.5	54	210,000
Manila Electric Co. B	54	54.5	54	54.5	851,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.5	9.5	9.4	9.5	4,182,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.15	4.1	4.1	3,780,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	200,000
Phil Natl Const. Corp.	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	167,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.1	1.12	1.1	1.12	167,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	23,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21	21	21	21	10,800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42	41.5	42	369,000
RFM Corp.	1	1	1	1	200,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.8	3.05	2.75	2.75	1,780,000
San Miguel Corp. A	67	67	66.5	67	44,300
San Miguel Corp. B	74.5	74.5	74	74	117,700
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.18	2.18	2.08	2.1	533,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.75	18.75	5,211,200
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
SouthEast Asian Cement	1.04	1.04	1	1	12,677,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.15	811,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.65	2.65	2.65	2.65	4,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.6	7.6	7.5	7.5	1,093,000
Phil Natl Const. Corp.	8.3	8.3	8.3	8.3	42,000
Republic Cement Corp.	3.95	3.95	3.9	3.9	185,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.3	5.4	5.2	5.3	2,746,000
Matuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.62	0.62	0.62	0.62	10,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.71	0.72	0.7	0.71	25,540,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.185	0.2	34,040,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0085	0.0085	0.008	0.008	70,000,000
Ayala Land Inc.	516	516	510	510	436,270
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.68	0.70	0.67	0.67	5,450,000
Abottz Equity Ventures	6.9	7	6.9	6.9	632,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.0625	0.0625	0.06	0.06	44,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	322,000
Apco Group Inc.	0.39	0.39	0.37	0.37	6,000,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	10,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.08	1.16	1.08	1.14	103,031,000
Aln Holdings Inc.	1.82	1.82	1.82	1.82	80,000
Bapugo Gold Holdings Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.3	83,000
Balete Resources & Hldgs	1.14	1.14	1.1	1.1	27,000
Bancorian Cons Indus Inc.	9.3	9.3	9.1	9.1	89,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.2	2.2	2,294,000
Dmci Holdings Inc.	5.9	6	5.8	5.8	2,947,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.55	3.55	3.55	3.55	574,000
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.13	0.17	0.13	0.17	520,000
G. Summit Holdings Inc.	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	3,000,000
Keppel Holdings B	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	97,000
Matuhay Holdings Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	20,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4	4.1	3.9	3.95	73,000
Multitech Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.54	1.58	1,703,000
Pacific	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	3,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.2	0.205	0.19	0.19	1,500,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	60,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	30,000
Simphi Corp.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	212,000
Sin Investments Corp.	305	310	305	310	3,070,000
South China Resources Inc.	1.04	1.04	1.04	1.04	190,000
Unifi Res. & Holdings Co	0.32	0.32	0.29	0.29	13,010,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	15.25	15.25	15.25	15.25	1,408,400
Aranea Properties Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	50,000
Belle Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.1	1.12	643,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.66	1.66	1.56	1.6	506,000
Cebu Development Corp.	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.6	10,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.2	3.25	3.15	3.15	216,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	176,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	6,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. B	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	50,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.32	0.32	0.31	0.31	7,310,000
Eib Realty Developers Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	90,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.53	0.54	3,070,000
Ever-Goteco Resources	0.07	0.07	0.0625	0.0625	3,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	2	2	1.98	2	6,482,000
Goteco Land Inc.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	200,000
Goteco Land Inc. B	0.145	0.16	0.135	0.135	870,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.5	2.9	2.5	2.9	160,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	8,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	35,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	2,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.48	0.48	0.45	0.45	1,070,000
Phil-Estate Land Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.63	0.64	1,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.3	2.3	2.25	2.28	10,288,000
Metropacific Inc. Corp.	5.1	5.4	5.1	5.4	2,683,000
Mrc Allied Ind. Inc.	0.39	0.4	0.38	0.38	1,750,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	15.5	15.5	15.25	15.25	707,300
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.68	0.68	0.65	0.66	11,020,000
Sin Development Corp.	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	4,604,000
Sin Prime Holdings Inc.	10	10.25	10	10.25	4,604,000
Univide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.11	0.11	6,880,000
SERVICE					
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp	21	21	20.5	20.75	37,300
Digital Telecom Phils Inc	1.92	1.94	1.88	1.92	11,080,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1240	1240	1230	1230	8,110
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.6	4,052,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2390	2395	2325	2325	223,260
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	1,470,000
Imperial Res.	0.019	0.019	0.019	0.019	23,200,000
Ionics Inc.	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	255,

Gov't sticking to P1.119-T revenue target for '07

Entry of China-made vehicles seen to trigger growth of RP mart

By Ronnel W. Domingo

MAKERS OF VEHICLE PARTS YESTERDAY expressed optimism that the entry into the country of vehicles from China would help expand the local automotive market, the same way that an influx of Chinese bikes helped boost local motorcycle sales.

Eddie Jose, president of the Motor Vehicle Parts Manufacturers Association of the Philippines, said the so-called "China effect" opened wide the local market for motorcycles, widened its client base and somehow brought down the prices of motorcycles.

Earlier this year, a distributor launched Chinese-made vehicles under the brand Nexus.

Jose said MVPMAP was confident this same phenomenon would happen in the local automotive industry as the group pushes for the implementation of a Philippine Utility Vehicle (PhUV) Program.

"We are hoping that the (proposed) PhUV program would give local car assemblers and parts manufacturers the much-needed critical mass of new automobile users that would result in economies of scale and, consequently, lower vehicle prices," he said.

Jose added that MVPMAP was in talks with government financial institutions for the provision of retail financing that would help make the PhUV affordable.

"We realize that retail financing is a key success factor in the PhUV Program as it was in the motorcycle industry," he explained. "It will result in a broader spectrum of potential client base, increase demand and effectively jump start the program."

Chinese motorcycles first came into the country in the late 1990s and retail financing—mostly through in-house programs—threw the doors open for people who wanted to buy

bikes but could not afford to pay in cash.

Financing packages allowed for a down payment of as little as P3,000 and a monthly installment of P1,000, which came out cheaper than commuting by the usual modes of public transportation.

Consequently, demand for bikes increased in levels that pushed industry growth at a range of 30 percent to 40 percent yearly in the past several years.

Starting with Chinese-made entry-level bikes, customers eventually moved to better, higher quality bikes of the relatively more expensive Japanese brands.

"This also provided local manufacturers and their parts manufacturers with the economies of scale that they needed, thus enabling them to expand their operations, lower their prices and even invite foreign investors," Jose said.

DOF says goal stays despite difficulty of BIR in meeting its expected tax take

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT IS STICKING TO ITS revenue collection target next year of P1.119 trillion even if the Bureau of Internal Revenue, its main revenue collector, is having difficulty meeting its tax collection this year.

Under the fiscal program for 2007, the government should collect P1.119 trillion and limit expenditures to P1.182 trillion to achieve a budget deficit of P63 billion.

The deficit ceiling set for next year is lower than the P125 billion programmed deficit for 2006.

"It is important to gain the confidence of the financial community. If we don't attain our revenue target, they (investors) may doubt our ability to finance spending," Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said in a press briefing by economic managers last Thursday.

Of the P1.119 trillion revenue target for next year, P784 billion will be collected by the BIR, which is 16-percent more than the P675.4 billion that BIR is expected to collect this year.

The 2007 tax collection goal, however, is being contested by the BIR, which said its 2006 target was already too high.

The BIR insisted that its target for this year should only be P601.4 billion, taking into account the reduced volume of government securities issued by the government.

BIR Commissioner Jose Mario Bunag said the lower-than-expected volume of Treasury bills and bonds issued by the government prevented the BIR from collecting programmed tax collection from income on government securities.

As of end-November, the BIR was off its full-year target. Tax collection stood at only

P594.1 billion, or P27 billion lower than the P621-billion official target for the 11-month period.

Teves said, however, it was important to stick with the fiscal program earlier set by the government to gain the investors' confidence.

This year, the government ability to surpass its fiscal targets is credited for encouraging credit rating agencies to improve their outlook on the Philippines' credit standing from "negative" to "stable."

The better-than-expected fiscal performance was also credited for lowering interest rates, which in turn reduced the government's cost of borrowings.

In response to BIR's call, Teves said the government would review the reasons behind the tax collection shortfall.

He said the BIR would be asked to strengthen the implementation of various programs that enhance collection efficiency.

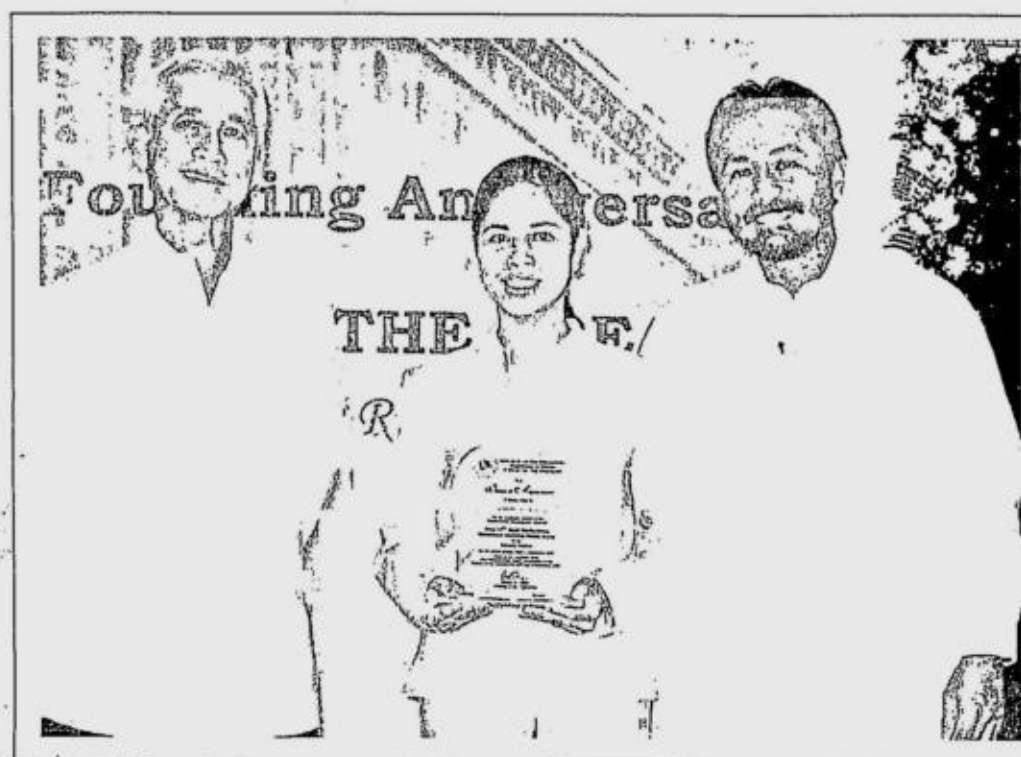
These programs include the benchmarking method, the third-party information system, and the update of the BIR's taxpayers database.

Under the benchmarking method, the BIR would determine the average income of companies in an industry.

A corporate taxpayer that declares an income that is significantly less than the benchmark would be subjected to audit.

Under the third-party information system, on the other hand, the BIR will ask the help of government entities that could provide data relevant to tax audit.

The Securities and Exchange Commission, for instance, could provide the BIR with information on the firms' corporate earnings, which the tax collector could use to compare with their income declaration to the BIR.



DEUTSCHE Bank named leading primary gov't securities dealer in RP. Receiving the award is Joan Polcarpio (middle), head of Deutsche Bank's global rates trading. With her are (L) Finance Secretary Margarito Teves and National Treasurer Omar Cruz.

Neda wants more Chinese tourists

THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND Development Authority wants the government to implement reforms to attract more Chinese tourists to the country.

Neda Director General Romulo Neri noted the high volume of Chinese tourists, saying there were about 30 million of them visiting various Asian countries every year.

But while neighboring countries significantly benefit from the high volume of Chinese tourists, the Philippines attracts only a measly 100,000 a year.

Neri said one of the reforms necessary to entice more Chinese tourists to the Philippines was to monitor the behavior of immigration authorities toward visiting Chinese tourists.

The country's chief economist said he had received reports of complaint by Chinese tourists who were allegedly harassed by immigration officials, who, he said, often regard Chinese foreigners as undesirable aliens.

He cited an instance when some Chinese tourists were detained by immigration officials for suspicion of

drug smuggling, but were later on released for lack of evidence.

"These kind of news turns off Chinese tourists," he said.

Neri also said the government should work on liberalizing the government's airline policies so that more foreign carriers can more easily bring in tourists into the Philippines.

He said the country was foregoing huge amount of potential revenues and employment opportunities because of restrictions in the airline industry.

Michelle V. Remo

DTI, courier company ink pact

THE TRADE DEPARTMENT'S National Capital Region office yesterday announced it had signed a pact with courier service provider Air21, the local licensee of FedEx, to make possible business registration without having to go through long lines and face-to-face transactions with government employees.

The move is part of efforts to cut red tape and make doing business easier in the capital in light of Executive Order No. 557 titled "Establishing an Anti-Red Tape Task Force."

Under this program, business owner can file their applications through www.dti-

cr.ph, ask questions by call center, download forms through the Internet and send and receive their registration papers via courier for a fee of P170.

Trade Assistant Secretary Angel L. Pelayo said the partnership with Air21 was finalized through a memorandum of agreement signed last Dec. 15, which would take effect for a year.

Pelayo said clients could call up Air 21 customer service representatives through its call center dedicated to business name applications at 855-8424. An Air 21 representative will pick up the application forms, required

documents and fees from the residence of the applicants and turn them over to the Business Registration Center in Makati City, within 24 hours from the receipt of the forms.

Air 21 will thereafter deliver the approved business name applications, together with the DTI-issued official receipts to the applicants within 24 hours from the receipt of these documents from DTI.

Pelayo, who is acting regional director of DTI-NCR, encouraged businessmen to avail themselves of the courier service to save them time and effort. Ronnel W. Domingo

Japan firm joins customer scheme

By Abigail L. Ho

JAPANESE FIRM FUTABA Corp. Philippines has signed up for the National Power Corp.-Manila Electric Co. Customer Choice Program (CCP), making it the first industrial firm to do so.

Futaba manufactures vacuum fluorescent displays and other electronics products, and is located in the Philippine Economic Zone Authority-operated Laguna Technopark.

In a statement issued yesterday, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said having Futaba in the program should encourage other bulk power

users to participate in the program.

The CCP allows Meralco customers with a peak demand of at least 1 megawatt (MW) a month to take advantage of Napocor's time-of-use (TOU) rates.

The TOU scheme provides Napocor customers with flexible hourly rates that are lowest during off-peak hours, or between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m., and highest during peak hours, or from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sundays and holidays are also considered off-peak times.

Rates are also lower during the wet season, or from

July to December, as electricity demand usually falls during this time due to the colder weather. Hydroelectric plants are also able to produce more power during these months.

Industrial users can opt to shift their loads to off-peak hours to take advantage of lower rates.

The CCP aims to enable large power users to avail themselves of lower electricity rates, to facilitate the privatization of Napocor's assets and to address the looming power supply problem, according to Meralco and Napocor's joint CCP filing with the Energy Regulatory Commission.

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SCIENCE/HEALTH

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Unique packaging to address osteoporosis, bone building

By Charles E. Buban

OSTEOPOROSIS IS THE NAME GIVEN to a diagnosis of weakened bones. At this stage, the bones are so fragile that even a minor bump or fall could cause serious injury like hip fracture that requires hospitalization and major surgery and vertebral (spinal) fractures that could lead to loss of height, severe back pain and deformity.

But even if one has been diagnosed with osteoporosis, Dr. Florante Gonzaga, president of Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Foundation, said it's not too late to take steps to protect bone health.

"While consuming the recommended amounts of calcium and vitamin D, performing weight-bearing exercises and quitting smoking can help, there are also several treatment options available to slow bone loss and even build new ones," he advised.

The doctor reminded that even if one is already taking osteoporosis medication, that person should also take calcium and vitamin D supplements because without enough calcium, the medicine won't be as effective while vitamin D will help the body absorb the amount of calcium it needs.

Gonzaga also noted that because of the chronic nature of osteoporosis (requiring long-term treatment) patients have a hard time complying with this prescribed treatment regimen, which could be costly as well as leaving them at greater risk.

Once-a-week formulation

Because of failures to take drugs correctly or patients' inability to stick to the strict dosing requirements associated with drugs, pharmaceutical companies like Sanofi-Aventis came up with once-a-week formulation.

The company's once-a-week risedronate

sodium tablets (Actonel 35 mg), an osteoporosis drug, is one example.

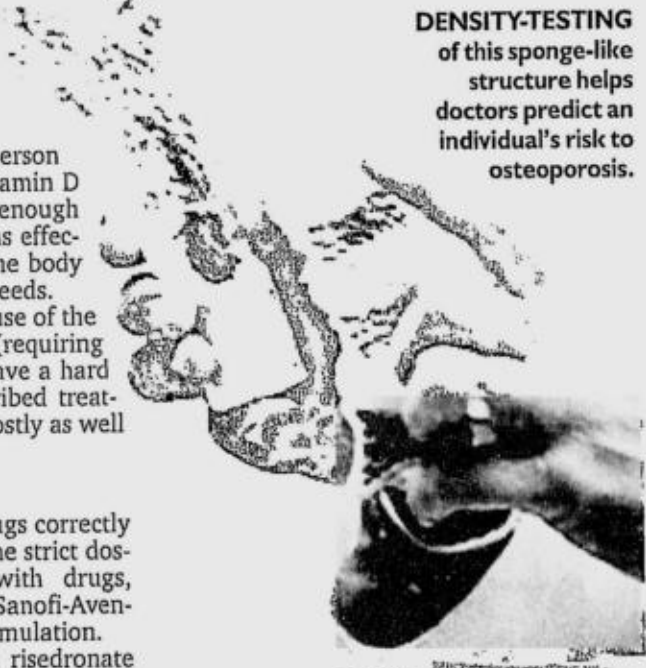
Recently, Sanofi-Aventis repackaged this drug and came out with an "osteoporosis monthly medication pack" containing four 35 mg tablets of risedronate sodium as well as 32 caplets of Calvit, which contains 1,566 mg calcium and 200 IU vitamin D.

"With this unique packaging, patients now have a choice to take the drug once a week and enjoy a better chance of adhering to their treatment regimen. Treatment is further enhanced with the addition of the calcium and vitamin D supplementation, which a lot of patients take for granted or fail to consider," explained Cheryl Ann Serrano, Sanofi-Aventis corporate communications manager.

First-line drugs

Risedronate sodium belongs to a class of medications called bisphosphonates, consid-

DENSITY-TESTING
of this sponge-like structure helps doctors predict an individual's risk to osteoporosis.



In good times and bad...

WEDDING VOWS USUALLY ASK THAT THE couple promise to stay together "in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for better and for worse." Most people, researchers included, tend to focus on how couples fare under stressful conditions such as illness and last-minute shopping for presents just before Christmas.

Logic says that if a couple can stand together when everyone seems against them, they can weather anything. A recent study from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) now suggests that the act of sharing positive news with a partner and receiving equally affirming feedback is equally, if not more, important for the relationship's long-term prospects.

The study, which appeared in the November issue of the *Journal of Psychology and Social Psychology*, was authored by psychologists Shelly Gable and Gian Gonzaga. Amy Strachman, a graduate student in Dr. Gable's lab, also contributed to the study. All three authors of the study are affiliated with UCLA's Interdisciplinary Relationship Science Program, where Dr. Gable also serves as the program's co-director.

The dating website

The paper also notes another affiliation worth disclosing: Dr. Gonzaga also serves as director of basic relationship science and senior research scientist at eHarmony Labs. Dr. Gable's graduate student Strachman works at eHarmony Labs, which offers relationship research training for students interested in the field.

DISCOVER



Massie Santos Ballon

In reality, eHarmony Labs is the research facility of eHarmony.com, a popular online dating service that promises to match couples using "29 dimensions of compatibility." The dating website regularly posts photos of couples who've gotten married after meeting through eHarmony.com, and it's safe to say that the research studies done by eHarmony Labs are used in part to help others find their own mates and to help maintain the existing relationships so that eHarmony.com lives up to its own advertising.

2 hypotheses

Gable et al. started the study with 2 hypotheses: 1) each partner would react favorably toward the good news mentioned and would respond less favorably toward more neutral or negative news discussed; and, 2) the satisfaction ratings provided by the couples of their partners' feedback to the positive news discussions would serve as a predictive model for their long-term prospects.

The researchers worked with 79 heterosexual couples whose relationships were at least 6 months old. All participants first answered a brief questionnaire regarding their relationships. Each couple was then placed in a room

where a video camera could record both of their faces at all times. Depending on random assignment, the man and woman in each relationship alternatively relived a recent positive or negative experience that would then be discussed with the other person.

Rate the feedback

At the end of each brief discussion, the couple was asked to individually rate the feedback received from the other person. Two months after the original test, follow-up questionnaires were mailed out to the participants. Only a third of the test participants responded, with a handful that couldn't answer the questionnaire as they had since broken up with their partners.

It's worth remembering that Christmas carols are either religious songs about the Nativity, children's songs about reindeer and presents and Santa, or songs about couples either together or apart. Given the study discussed above, one song in particular that is worth mentioning is "What are you doing New Year's Eve?"

For those in a relationship, the correct answer would be, "Spending it with you." Any other answers would arguably be considered negative feedback that would not bode well for the relationship's long-term prospects. More on Gable et al.'s study next week. Until then, feel free to test the notion that positive reinforcement is good for all parties involved and share the holiday spirit with everyone.

E-mail the author at massie@massie.com.

Christmas puzzles

IT IS NOW TIME FOR OUR ANNUAL Christmas puzzle contest. Five problems follow, and the mathematics required to solve them involves only logic, arithmetic, or algebra. I am happy to note that in the past few years, readers have become more sophisticated and creative, and I hope this will be the case once more.

Please send me your complete detailed solution. In math, sometimes the process of solving a problem is actually more important (and more gratifying) than getting the final answer. The first three readers to send the best solutions will each receive an autographed copy of my latest book, "In Love with Science: Outstanding Young Filipino Scientists Tell Their Stories" (Anvil, 2006), co-edited with Phil Rice Executive Director Dr. Leo Sebastian.

Send your solutions to me at blessbook@yahoo.com. Deadline of submission is Dec. 30, 2006. Winners and solutions will appear in my column on Jan. 6, 2007.

The puzzles below are classics, so enjoy!

1. Your friend is playing a variation of tic-tac-toe, with the symbols X and O. However, here the person who first places three same symbols in a row, column, or diagonal does not win. He loses. You are in the middle of a game. You play O and it is your turn. What move must you then make in order to win? Explain your solution.

X X O
O
X

2. Tessa bought two identical vases, but because of a sudden emergency, she had to sell them quickly. She sold them for P600 each. On one vase, Tessa made a profit of 20 percent and on the other vase, she lost 20 percent. Did she make or lose money on the whole deal? By how much? Show your solution.

3. You are at a club where there are only pure liars and pure truth-tellers. Rita comes up to you and says that the manager of the club told her that he was a liar. Is Rita a liar or a truth-teller? How do you know?

4. Aaron, Bert, Carlos and David visited the neighborhood sauna daily at noon. While relaxing in the sauna, Aaron and Bert would read magazines, Carlos would drink cold juice from a cooler, and David would chat on his cell phone. One day, when they left the sauna, they realized that David had not come out. When they returned to check on him, they found David with a fatal stab wound through his heart. The policeman searched the sauna for clues, but there was no trace of the murder weapon. He was a bright and imaginative policeman, so finally he was able to figure out that the murderer was one of David's friends. Who was the murderer and how did he kill David?

5. The boss was looking for a smart college graduate to be his assistant. There were three applicants: Mario, Jose and Tony. The boss told the three men that he had five hats (three

EUREKA!

Queena N. Lee-Chua



white and two black). He explained that he was going to put one hat on each of their heads. The first man to correctly give the color of his own hat, and explain how he solved the puzzle, would get the job. After the hats had been placed, Mario looked at the other two and said that he did not know the answer. Jose looked at Mario and Tony and said that he did not know the answer, either. Tony, who was blind, correctly stated the color of his hat and then went on to explain his reasoning. Tony got the job. What color was Tony's hat and how did he figure it out?

Text puzzles

Many readers constantly request for more puzzles. As a Christmas treat, I am including five favorites here (with answers), which are included in my text puzzles. To those clamor for more puzzles, the best way is to subscribe through text. Type PUZZLE and send to 2346 (Globe or Sun) or 206 (Smart). Each day you will receive a new puzzle, plus the solution to yesterday's question.

• What comes next: 40, 35, 34, 29, 28, 23, 22...?

Answer: 22. Use subtraction.

• A bus left Manila for Baguio at a speed of 80 kph. One hour later, another bus left Baguio for Manila at 100 kph. Which bus is farther from Manila when they meet?

Answer: Both buses will be at the same distance from Manila (and of course, from any other point) when they meet. Take a moment to think about this.

• Bacteria double every second. If you place one bacterium on an empty plate, it will take one minute for bacteria to fully cover it. How long will it take the plate to be completely covered if you initially place two (not one) bacteria?

Answer: 59 seconds. Since we start with two bacteria, we save one second, when the first bacterium splits into two. 60 seconds minus 1 second is 59 seconds.

• Some of our bones are hollow. Why?

Answer: Bones are created to bear maximum strength for their weight. They are often hollow at the center where the limb bends. In this case, a hollow bone is stronger than a solid bone of the same weight.

• Which word does not belong to the group: uncle, enjoyable, average, numeral, enemy?

Answer: Numeral. The other words all begin with vowels. Gotcha!

Have a merry and peaceful Christmas. ***

Queena N. Lee-Chua is professor of mathematics and psychology at Ateneo de Manila University. Contact her at blessbook@yahoo.com.

Fighting cancer on one's terms and turf

By Rafael R. Castillo, MD

DR. ERNESTO P. NAMIN, WHOM WE fondly call Ernie, is one of the country's highly respected cardiologists practicing in Bacolod City. He never fails to inspire anyone with his pleasant disposition, optimism and wit.

I have had the pleasure to have him as one of our regular columnists in the *Health & Lifestyle* magazine. I would look forward to his articles which were filled with insight and wisdom with a generous serving of wit. His words came like a soothing balm to frayed nerves but he had a way with words that could either make them soothing or tactfully critical as he wishes to, but never scathing or scornful.

Nine months ago, he was diagnosed to have cancer of the urinary tract which had already spread. He had no symptoms, and it was only diagnosed by routine laboratory examinations. He underwent surgery followed by chemotherapy a few months later.

'Par for the course'

For some people, being diagnosed to have cancer can zap their zest for life,

and change their disposition. But not Ernie. He even wrote about his experience in the High Blood column of this newspaper (PDI, Dec. 20, 2006, page A15). He has maintained his enthusiasm and harbors no bitterness. Now past 76 years, Ernie writes that his age is "par for the course." Trademark Ernie Namin wit.

Ernie's cancer was apparently held at bay for a while, but two months ago, repeat examinations showed recurrence of the tumor in the urinary bladder.

Another course of a new cancer chemotherapy was suggested by his oncologist, but Ernie declined. He's happy and feeling fine as he is, he told me on the phone two weeks ago. He regrets that sometimes, the treatment can be worse than the disease. Up to this day, he still sees his patients dutifully, but his partner, Dr. Susan Logronio sees to it that he doesn't get to work as hard as he did.

Routine check-ups

Just like Ernie, many may remain asymptomatic despite the growing, and sometimes, spreading cancer cells in their bodies. Routine check-ups can lead

to early detection and prompt treatment. Hence, screening tests are available for many cancers such as colon, prostate, liver and lung cancers.

In fact, tumor markers have already been identified and can be determined by simple blood tests.

With most cancers, the primary site and metastatic (spread) sites are easily detected by available tests. But doctors and doctors' relatives are notorious for having complicated medical problems. The medical community calls this the "Extension Syndrome." I still have to learn why it's called so. I'd rather call it the "Doctor's Mind Syndrome."

My theory is that doctors know the extent a disease could lead to, complications and all; hence, his mind is preoccupied with all the potential theoretical problems and complications, making them a reality. It's actually more like a self-fulfilling prophecy. After all, there is also a natural law which states that whatever the mind conceives, the body achieves. Negative factors like stress can accelerate this.

Ernie's case is also one for the books. Hence, he calls it cancer with a decoy. "It could have taken a foothold in the lungs

or in the prostate in plain sight, but mine had to be different," he says. He had prostate symptoms since a few years back, and he and his physicians thought that a benign prostatic hypertrophy with occasional urinary tract infections was all he had. The diagnosis of cancer came a big surprise to Ernie and his friends.

A big challenge

Cancer treatment, particularly when it has spread, remains a big challenge. Hence, whatever course of therapy considered must be discussed in detail with the patient. The patient must have a good idea of all possible options and alternatives, so he can make the decision himself. A patient armed with factual information is much more comfortable with his decision.

It is touching that Ernie has some reminders for doctors attending to cancer patients.

"Consider less expensive, less painful, less risky alternatives," he counsels. "Always consider the risk-benefit, discomfort-benefit and cost-benefit ratios (of treatment). The cost, tedium and discomfort of treatment can be back-breaking and heart-breaking. There is a place

for fine-tuning treatment but not if it is only of little help and no better than well considered clinical judgments. Labs are expensive, unreliable and require painful punctures." He requests his own physician to minimize, if not eliminate, academics.

Ernie suggests that the patient's quality, rather than duration of life, is more important. He says: "Easing discomfort is paramount, aware of the principle of double-effect—that if the best process presents necessary risks, but will ease discomfort—go for it."

Never losing hope

Writing about cancer always bring me painful memories of two of my elder brothers—Manoy Greg and Francis—who died of colon cancer. They, too, fought their cancers valiantly, never losing hope until the very end. Their cancer may have killed their bodies, but not for a moment was it able to dampen their spirit until their last breath. They knew that victory with God will be theirs in the end.

To our dear friend Ernie, keep up the good fight. We know you're fighting your affliction, not on conventional rules, but on your own terms and turf.

Global markets wary after key data, dollar stalls

HONG KONG—SHARES OF Asian exporters such as Sony Corp. eased on Friday after revised data showed the US economy grew slower than previously estimated.

Gold steadied after slipping below \$620 an ounce after oil fell on unusually mild temperatures in the United States, which helped cut demand for heating oil.

US crude was steady at \$62.66 a barrel in early Asian trade, and currency markets stalled in pre-holiday trade.

Revised data on Thursday showed the US economy grew by a 2 percent annual rate in the third quarter, down from an earlier estimated 2.2 percent growth rate, raising concerns about the health of Asia's top export market.

US economy grew slower than expected in third quarter

"Although expectations for a slowing US economy have been factored in to some extent, the data yesterday could snap momentum in local markets," said Lee Woo-hyun, an analyst at Kyobo Securities in Seoul.

Tokyo's Nikkei eased 0.23 percent by the end of the morning session as falls of 0.98 percent for Sony Corp. and 1.61 percent for Tokyo Electron offset takeover news that drove Pentax Corp. and Hoya Corp. higher.

Pentax jumped 6.67 percent after news on Thursday of an all-share takeover by Hoya, up 1.55 percent.

Analysts said there were also concerns that Japan's stock market may have risen too quickly recently.

The Nikkei hit a seven-month high on Thursday, after jumping nearly 10 percent from a trough on Nov. 27.

"Investors are alarmed that the market may be rising too high, too rapidly, and they're taking profits in stocks that have advanced," said Katsuhiko Kodama, a senior strategist at Toyo Securities.

Investors also sold energy firms and miners following the fall in oil and base metal prices. INPEX Holdings lost 1.1 percent,

Woodside Petroleum slid 2.0 percent and global miner Rio Tinto fell 2.33 percent.

US stocks dropped on Thursday on concerns that economic growth could be slowing faster than expected.

The Dow slid 0.34 percent, while the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite index lost 0.48 percent.

Looming holidays and thinning year-end trade kept the dollar in a tight range against other major currencies.

The dollar was little changed at 118.33 yen off a six-week high of 118.53 yen reached on Thursday.

The euro fetched \$1.3184 up from around \$1.3175 in late US trade and 155.99 yen not far off the record high of 156.42 yen set on Thursday.

"The currency market is already in a pre-holiday slumber and I doubt if there will be much activity," said a dealer at a Japanese trust bank.

Investors were also awaiting a batch of key US data due late yesterday, including November personal income and durable goods.

Japanese government bond (JGB) prices edged higher on gains in US Treasuries after weak US economic data, including a

surprisingly soft reading of mid-Atlantic business activity, kept alive hopes of an early US interest rate cut next year.

The benchmark 10-year JGB yield eased 1.5 ticks to 1.585 percent.

JGB yields fell sharply earlier this week after comments by Bank of Japan Governor Toshihiko Fukui dampened expectations for a rate increase next month.

The MSCI index of Asian stocks outside Japan was up just 0.15 percent yesterday morning.

South Korea's KOSPI and Hong Kong's Hang Seng were flat, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 index, Taiwan and Singapore's Straits Times were up between 0.1 and 0.4 percent. **Reuters**

Japan retail investors more upbeat on stocks

TOKYO—JAPANESE RETAIL INVESTORS have become positive on Japanese stocks as current share prices look discounted compared with US and European shares and corporate earnings remained solid, a Reuters survey showed on Friday.

Japanese stocks indeed appear to be picking up with the Nikkei share average topping 17,000 for the first time in more than seven months this week.

The survey conducted between Dec. 11-14 with 492 retail investors found that many expect the benchmark to rise as high as to 17,500 by March next year.

For December, the headline index on market confidence rebounded to +24, compared with -10 a month ago. The number was also the highest since September.

"Of all the global stock markets, Japan is the only one which is lagging," said a man in his 50s who said his financial assets are worth more than 100 million yen (\$845,000).

Since January, the UK's FTSE 100 index has gained 10 percent

and the US' Standard & Poor's 500 index expanded 14 percent, but Japan's broader TOPIX index has only risen about 1 percent.

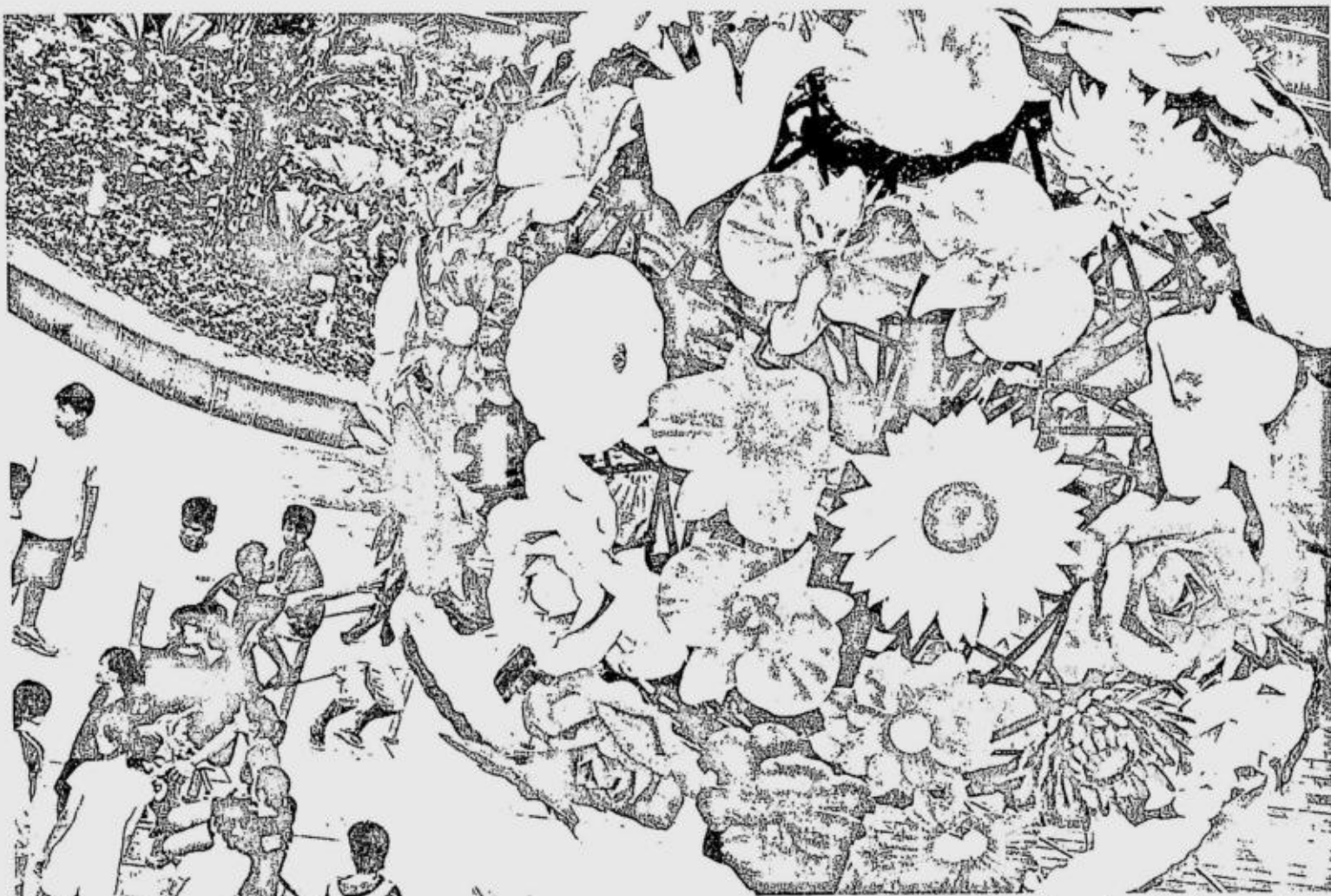
A growing number of mergers and acquisitions (M&A), solid corporate earnings and an expected inflow of money from retiring baby boomers were also reasons to be bullish about Japanese stocks.

Pessimists, on the other hand, voiced concern about the impact of a possible interest rate hike on corporate earnings and uncertain outlooks for the US and Japanese economies.

Geopolitical risks such as North Korea were another negative factor while some cited investors' lack of confidence in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his policies.

On the expected range for the Nikkei average between January and March next year, the median was 15,925 to 17,500.

Meanwhile, the survey found that retail investors became bullish in all sectors, but auto and steel and other materials were their favorites. **Reuters**



PEOPLE gather under the "flower tree," an artwork sculpture displayed next to the Vivo City, Singapore's latest shopping mall. Singapore's robust economy created a record 124,500 jobs in the first nine months of the year, surpassing even the employment gains of 113,300 in 2005. **AFP**

Opec remains cautious

LONDON—MOST OPEC PRODUCERS have for 2007 raised the oil prices on which they base their budgets, reducing the amount in reserve, as they grow more reliant on ready cash.

Emboldened by a four-year price rally, many have embarked on major spending projects and, having paid down foreign debt, can afford to spend now as well as later.

But they remain cautious and targets set by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, just like those used by international oil companies, still tend to be well below the market in part as a precaution against any price collapse.

"We always assume a low price. It's a kind of phantom price," said Shokri Ghanem, head of Libya's National Oil Corporation.

He said the country was planning on \$30-\$32 a barrel for its crude and that any surplus would go to a reserve fund.

Opec's biggest exporter Saudi Arabia said this week it would run a record budget surplus of \$71 billion in 2006, following this year's rally that took US crude to an all-time high of \$78.40 in July. Saudi crude is worth around \$5 less than US crude.

Next year's income is expected to fall as Opec earnings are squeezed by a weaker global economy and decreased demand for its crude as rival non-Opec supplies come onstream.

While the international oil price is widely expected to fall, Saudi Arabia is believed to have shifted its budget price upwards, further trimming any budget surplus.

"They're leaving less to go to savings. Their dependence on oil revenues has increased,"

said Manouchehr Takin of the Centre for Global Energy Studies in London.

The kingdom does not disclose the oil price on which it bases its budget, but Brad Bourland, chief economist at Samba Financial Group, said the government was assuming a price of around \$40 a barrel for Saudi crude in 2007, up from an assumption of mid to high \$30s for 2006.

Saudi Arabia, which has a high level of unemployment and a non-diversified economy, has a strong need for oil revenue.

But the fact it has greatly reduced its debt during the prolonged rally means it is less vulnerable to any price collapse than in the past.

Other countries with a strong focus on current expenditure include Venezuela and Iran, said Greg Priddy, analyst at Eurasia Group in Washington.

The lowest price assumption is that set by Algeria, which is maintaining a budget level of \$19 a barrel, steady with this year and last year.

"We are paying off our debts," Algerian Energy and Mines Minister Chakib Khelil said of the surplus.

He said money was being put aside for plans to invest around \$100 billion on roads, a railway, schools, hospitals and agriculture, for instance. "Basically, anything to improve the infrastructure," said Khelil.

The only Opec countries to set more realistic budget prices are those least likely to generate surplus revenues.

Iraq, still recovering from the regime of Saddam Hussein and the US-led invasion of 2003, is banking on a price of around \$50, Oil Minister Hussain al-Shahristani said, up from \$46.6 for this year. **Reuters**

China economy seen up 9.8% in 2007

BEIJING—CHINA'S SIZZLING ECONOMY will slow slightly next year but still should grow by a robust 9.8 percent even as Beijing extends controls to cool off an investment boom, the Central Bank said in a report published Friday.

The forecast was in line with outside estimates but well above the 8 percent target for 2007 set by a government strategy report released this month. It would be by far the highest growth rate for any of the world's major economies.

Growth this year should be 10.5 percent, said the Central Bank report, which was carried on the Web site of the official China Securities Journal newspaper. That was in line with earlier official forecasts.

Communist leaders want rapid growth to reduce poverty. But they are trying to stop an investment boom in real estate and other industries where they worry that overspending on unneeded factories and other assets could ignite inflation or a debt crisis.

Beijing has raised interest rates twice this year, tightened controls on credit and imposed curbs on new construction.

Despite the controls, the government says investment in factories and other fixed assets in the first 11 months of this year soared by 26.6 percent over the same period last year.

In comments to state media, the chairman of China's main planning

agency, the National Development and Reform Commission, said this month that the "relentless expansion has yet to be stopped."

Inflation should be 1.4 percent this year and 2 percent in 2007, the Central Bank report said.

The government reported economic growth of 10.7 percent for the first nine months of the year. But official indicators show the expansion has slowed slightly since then.

The planning report, released this month following a meeting led by President Hu Jintao, said Beijing would focus next year on trying to shift the basis of China's economic growth from investment and exports to domestic consumption. **AP**

Toyota gears up for top automaker rank

NAGOYA, JAPAN—TOYOTA ANNOUNCED on Friday a global production target of 9.42 million vehicles for next year, increasing the odds that the Japanese manufacturer will surpass troubled General Motors Corp. as the world's No. 1 automaker.

The latest figure, announced by Toyota in a release, marks a 4 percent increase over the 9.04 million vehicles the company expects to produce this year and easily clears the 9.2 million vehicles GM is estimated to have produced this year.

GM does not give targets for next year, but it has been forced to scale back production recently, seeing its

market share eroded by Asian automakers, including Toyota, which have a reputation for better mileage.

Of Toyota's projected volume for next year, overseas production will rise 8 percent to 4.27 million vehicles while its domestic output will increase 1 percent to 5.15 million vehicles, the company said. The projections include Toyota Motor Corp.'s subsidiaries, truck-maker Hino Motors, Daihatsu Motor Co., which makes small cars.

Toyota is on a roll, reporting record profits, churning out best-sellers like the Camry and Corolla as well as carving out a reputation in hybrids, which use a fine-tuned technology of

switching between a gasoline engine and electric motor to save gas at a time when oil prices are rising.

Toyota, which passed up Ford Motor Co. as the world's No. 2 automaker in 2003, also painted a bright picture of sales in 2007. It is expecting to sell 9.34 million vehicles globally next year, up from 6 percent from 8.8 million expected for this year.

Toyota's challenge is to maintain its reputation for quality cars and customer satisfaction at the same time that it continues to rev up production. The company has repeatedly promised to strengthen quality controls. **AP**

Microcredit helps Aceh's women rebuild lives after tsunami

LAM KUTA BLANGMEE, INDONESIA—Two years after the tsunami killed 168,000 in the Indonesian province of Aceh, microcredit is helping thousands of people, mostly women, rebuild their lives.

Pioneered by Bangladeshi Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, microcredit is essentially a small loan extended to a poor person lacking the collateral required by regular banks to help them start or expand a small business.

Few Acehese have heard of Yunus or his Grameen Bank, but his microcredit methods are spreading across the province where tiny loans are helping women set up small but thriving businesses.

In tsunami-devastated Lam Kuta village on the west coast of

Aceh, Salmia said she nearly doubled her income selling cakes after taking out two loans of one million rupiah (\$100) each through a community microcredit scheme.

"I bought pans, a mixer, everything I needed to make cakes, including sugar and rice flour," the 36-year-old kindergarten helper told AFP, pointing to appliances stacked on the floor of her kitchen.

Every evening she makes cakes and rissoles and drops them off at nearby stalls the following morning.

"At the end of the day, I pick up the money. I make 500,000 rupiah (50 dollars) per month," Salmia said with a smile.

Across the road, when the

tsunami killed her husband, a child and wiped out their house and well building business, Abida, 50, had to start from scratch while bringing up her nine remaining children alone.

"Everything was gone but our land so I had no money to buy sand, cement, moulds to make the well rings again," she explained, adding that "with so many children, you need to keep going." So a year ago, Abida and nine other women gathered upon the invitation of French non-government organization Triangle Generation Humanitaire to pool small amounts of money, which are shared on a weekly basis between members.

Triangle provided initial capi-

tal of 75,000 euros (\$97,500) shared between nine groups of 10 people who each week put 50 cents into a joint fund.

"The idea was not only to restart the local economy but also to reinstate social links lost with the tsunami," project chief Abel Bove explained to AFP.

Each week the group picks a member who goes home with the cash from their donations and, more importantly, one of them can ask for a loan of up to 200 dollars.

With many houses being rebuilt, Abida has successfully restarted her husband's business and now employs two men.

All the members had been able to reimburse the loans, Bove said,

adding that women were usually more reliable.

S.M. Ahsan Habib, who manages funds from the US-based Grameen Foundation, which aims to provide 25,000 Acehese with access to microcredit before June 2009, agreed money was safer in women's hands.

"If you give it to men they'll just spend it at the coffee shop or to buy cigarettes," he told AFP.

Acehese women often bake and sell cakes or own a small stall next to their house, so "they don't need to learn how to do business. What they need is capital," said the Bangladeshi microcredit expert.

Aceh, which is gradually implementing Islamic law, has a

dormant network of Sharia banks offering loans which are interest-free but have a profit-sharing mechanism instead.

"If you make a 10 percent profit, 30 percent of this profit goes to the creditor while you keep the remaining 70 percent," explained Said Hisyam, the manager of the Institute for Finance and Capitalization at the Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Aceh and Nias (BRR).

In May 2006, BRR established an \$8.5-million fund along with the Asian Development Bank to capitalize some 140 licensed financial institutions in Aceh and enable them to extend microfinance to 100,000 people so far. **AFP**

PROPERTY

Taking loft living to new heights

By Charles E. Buban

FOR A NUMBER OF FILIPINOS as well as expatriates, moving to a condominium in the city is about tapping into the excitement and cultural opportunities of an urban neighborhood, which could also mean shorter commute to work.

But finding a place in the city could also mean sacrificing the larger living spaces usually found in properties outside cities or suburban areas.

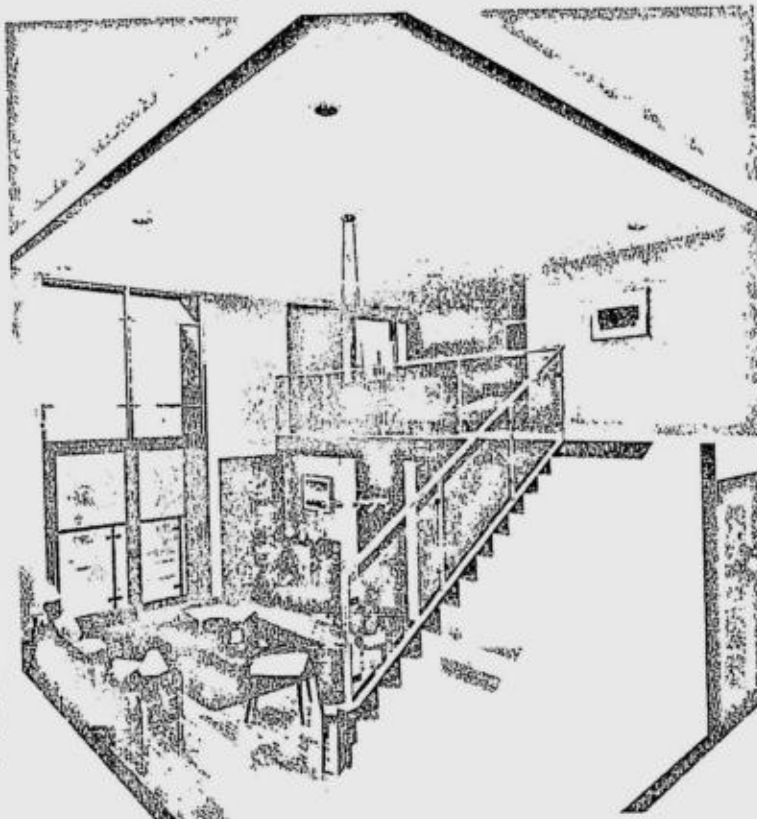
This has changed recently with the introduction of loft-type units in condominium developments that offer far more space than average condominium or apartment units.

"Loft living has indeed swept through the country and changed the urban residential landscape. The market nowadays wants space and, since typical condominium unit measures 8 feet high, floor to ceiling, a loft-type unit is certainly more attractive," said Century Properties Inc. COO and Grand Soho Makati managing director John Victor Antonio.

Spacious living areas

The 40-story Grand Soho Makati (www.gsmcondo.com), located at the corner of HV Dela Costa and Buendia Avenue, is one of the newest offerings from Century Properties as well as one of condominium properties that offer loft units with open layouts and expansive floor-to-ceiling windows.

But while the Grand Soho Makati offers studio, one-, two-, and three-bedroom regular units as well as one- and two-bedroom lofts, it

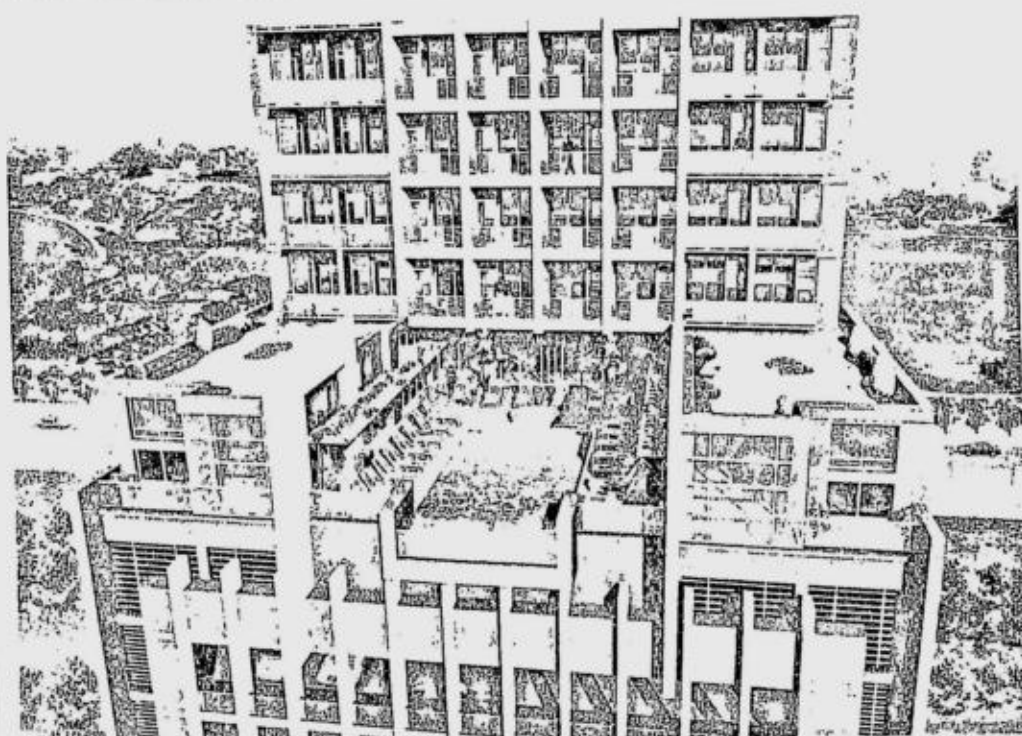


is in the Skyloft units that will truly define the project from its competitors.

"Grand Soho Makati takes loft living to the next level by offering exceptionally designed, fully furnished and fully fitted loft units as well as exclusive Skylofts," Antonio described.

Skylofts are one-bedroom loft units overlooking the building's infinity pool and sun deck. Located at the ninth floor, Skylofts will have floor plans measuring 54 to 56 sq m and

have 20-foot-high ceilings and oversized glass windows. "Skylofts are for discriminating set of loft buyers who want something even more distinctive than a one-, two- or three-bedroom loft. It's an ideal upgrade," Antonio described.



OVERLOOKING the infinity pool and sun deck, the Skylofts units offers a unique loft living experience for its owners.

Fully fitted, fully furnished

Like all Grand Soho Makati units, Skylofts come fully fitted and fully furnished complete with bedroom, kitchen, living room and dining room appliances and furniture.

Buyers will have a choice of three exceptional interior design options—modern, sleek and contemporary—with creative uses of color and space for each variant.

Antonio described that these designs will use light, dark or combination themes, allowing residents to maximize their unit by creating professionally designed living areas (courtesy of the same design team behind Esensa East Forbes, which was recently voted by Asia-week magazine as one of the best

residential buildings in Asia.

To suit the individual style preferences of each unit owner, Antonio said the design team used in varying ways streamlined furnishings, elegant color palettes and reflective elements such as mirrors and glass.

43% more affordable

Antonio also revealed that compared to other similar developments, Grand Soho Makati is up to 43 percent more affordable because of a unique co-development type of ownership (buyers will not be subjected to value-added tax, transfer fees and documentary stamps).

He said that with flexible and interest-free payment terms, buyers who want to get that feeling of space can have their very own loft unit for as low as P3.4 million.

Grand Soho Makati, which is expected to be turned over by December 2009, has model units located at the second level (low-rise) of Pacific Star Building located at the corner of Sen. Gil Puyat and Makati avenues.

Brittany: Living larger than life

IN A METROPOLIS WITH AN ESTIMATED population of about 20 million, space is a luxury many have chosen to forego in favor of proximity to better opportunities. Metro Manila has grown into the stereotypical urban jungle with the human crush on the top of the list of its least favorable features.

For maverick real estate developer Brittany Corp., however, space is always a necessity to achieve a high standard of quality of living. Space is never a luxury but an essential component of the good life. It is what every man deserves to enjoy, especially after a hard day's work.

Maverick real estate masterplanner Brittany lived out the value it put on the essentiality of space in the WideLots of Portofino. Brittany certainly addressed what used to be an unmet market need as indicated by the warm reception the market has given to this home concept. In response to this success, it is now giving birth to WideLots 2 of Portofino.

The good life

"It is often said that a man's home is his castle. Though the design is far from medieval, the space that Brittany's WideLots 2 of Portofino offers can certainly make any resident feel like he is living in a palace. With this Italian-inspired offering from Portofino, Alabang once again raises the bar on *la dolce vita*. Indeed, the good life is getting better and better with Brittany.

"Space is essential to fine living. No one can claim to live comfortably when denied of it. It is just not possible. But WideLots 2 of Portofino Heights is not just about offering a large space. It is, more importantly, about utilizing this additional space to

maximize its value to the residents. That is what masterfully planning a master-planned community is all about. And that is what Brittany Corp. has always stood for," said Brittany Corp. president Jing Serrano.

69 prime lots

A part of the exclusive 18-hectare development, WideLots 2 of Portofino is composed of only 69 prime lots of custom home sites that can accommodate both Masters Collection home designs and Courtyards model homes. It is located adjacent to the original WideLots of Portofino and nestled on an area of a higher elevation within the property. It evokes a warm and vibrant Italian idyll that harmonizes with its neighboring enclaves. Together, they inspire lush and blissful living that makes Portofino one of the most elegant residences around.

The masterplan allows for wider frontage that ranges from 17 to 22 meters. This gives the entire community a grander look and feel. Each lot stretches horizontally, allowing homes to be viewed and better appreciated, creating a more striking appearance and offering lovelier "streetscapes." It also provides a larger open area that could accommodate outdoor activities where the entire family could join in.

The design also improves ventilation since air could circulate freely. Illumination is also addressed since it allows for more natural light to come in, thereby providing for a cleaner and fresher space that requires less electricity.

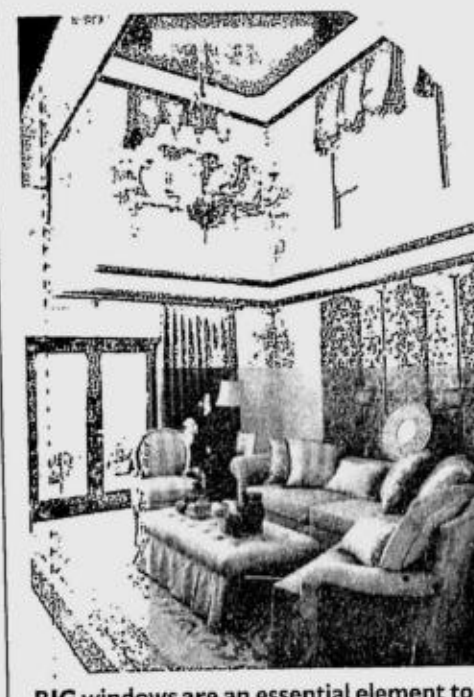
Stronger bond

Since the homes of WideLots are designed with a recessed garage, it naturally offers greater visibility from inside looking out. This design assures homeowners better security within the property.

And finally, because of the greater emphasis on the front of the house, a stronger bond with neighbors is formed. With activities being held in front rather than the backyard, there is more opportunity to wave hello to friends next door and across the street, fostering a greater sense of community.

Lot sizes ranging from 289 to 600 square meters give residents actual additional space and not merely the look of it. This allows for more private spaces within the house without sacrificing coziness—a key component shared by both Italian and Filipino homes.

Price package ranges from P4 to P8 million. The Portofino development, where the WideLots 2 is located, is an Italian-inspired property that takes its cues from Europe's paved cobblestones, sun-drenched colors, and magnificent architecture. The epitome of a good life, it combines the rustic charms of Southern Italy with all the conveniences that modern living affords.



BIG windows are an essential element to the design of homes in WideLots 2 of Portofino.



THE VILLAGE Clubhouse has a wide array of facilities such as social hall for functions and parties, game room (billiards, video and table games), fitness gym, children's pool and infinity pool, coffee shop and various sports facilities.

Preserving nature's grandeur at Ayala Greenfield Estates

IN THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE world of real estate development, Ayala Land Premier has established itself as a leader in providing innovatively designed and exceptionally engineered projects, from villages, residential buildings to leisure communities. Indeed, it seems to possess a knack for selecting development locations that eventually burgeon into progressive cities, and the unique ability to bring their visions into reality while maintaining the integrity and natural beauty of their chosen sites.

This is clearly evident in Ayala Greenfield Estates. This breathtaking community provides residents the chance to live in the midst of nature's grandeur while enjoying the best modern amenities designed to complement and enhance the living experience.

Ayala Greenfield Estates is envisioned to be a fully integrated residential, commercial and recreational development. "It has the locational advantage of being at the gateway of Metro Manila and at the center of the very progressive Calabarzon area," shares project manager Pol Tanco. "And with the project occupying 500 hectares, there is enough space to develop a complete community anchored by an exclusive subdivision and supported by commercial center and recreational facilities."

Perfect place

"Because of its natural setting and variety of recreational amenities, Ayala Greenfield Estates has become the perfect place to unwind and commune with nature. It's close enough to reach from the city yet far enough to escape the stresses of city life."

Located in the slopes of Calamba, Laguna, Ayala Greenfield Estates can be seen as a prime example of Ayala Land Premier's ingenuity in marrying its initial project concept with nature. "Ayala Greenfield Estates is at the foreground of Mount Makiling, a forest reserve and a natural landmark that ac-

centuates the project's mountain setting," relates Tanco. "Given that the natural beauty of the place is the development's most outstanding feature, it was our intention from the very beginning to preserve the natural surroundings."

By working with the site's natural terrain, Ayala Land Premier was able to preserve mature trees and move less earth. The rolling terrain and high elevation also offer a unique character to the project. "Since our terrain is a diversity of landforms, there is an opportunity to plan the community with more innovative design concepts," project architect Jonathan Fabricante explains.

Besides offering a cooler microclimate, the elevation of Ayala Greenfield Estates affords homeowners with spectacular views—a characteristic maximized through careful planning. "Different homeowners favor different views or home orientations," Fabricante relates.

Various activities

Fifteen hectares of land were allocated for the Nature Park, where residents can find and enjoy various activities. Here, families can look forward to features like the fishing lagoon, camping grounds, open playfields, picnic huts, tree houses and biking trails.

The park is also lush with trees that are grouped according to species. "The Palm Grove, for example, is filled with bismarck palms, date palms, red palms and other palm tree species," Tanco shares. Other themed sections include Summer Grove—which features flowering trees like rain trees and African tulips—Bamboo Grove, Fern Grove, Banyan Grove and Fragrance Grove, a collection of trees with fragrant flowers like ilang-ilang and kalachuchi. "Each grove has its own picnic hut where families can gather for barbecue parties and similar activities. These groves are also intercon-

nected by elaborate biking and hiking trails," Tanco says.

Ongoing development is the Riparian Grove, an area filled with mature and large trees. It will provide more camping grounds and hiking trails in a true forest setting, and will also feature an amphitheater, rest stations and view decks all under the canopy shade of the huge forest trees.

Golf course

Aside from these nature-themed amenities, Ayala Greenfield Estates also features a championship, all-weather golf course designed by no less than internationally acclaimed golf course architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. "We deliberately chose Jones for the project because the golf courses he designs create harmony with the natural surroundings, which is why he is known in the industry as the 'father of environmental golf course design,'" Tanco states. "Here, he was able to create a golf course that balances challenge and playability, and also preserves the inherent beauty of the environment."

The Village Clubhouse, designed by renowned design firm L.V. Locsin Partners, is another exciting attraction in Ayala Greenfield Estates. It has a wide array of facilities: a social hall that can accommodate functions and parties, a game room with billiards, video games and table games, fitness gym, indoor and outdoor basketball and tennis courts, badminton courts, a coffee shop, a children's pool and an infinity pool with jacuzzi.

Ayala Greenfield Estates is one of the choicest, exclusive residences managed and marketed by Ayala Land Premier, the high-end business unit of Ayala Land, whose excellent brand of service and care has led to the development of innovatively designed and exceptionally engineered, first-class communities over the last few decades. It is developed by Ayala Greenfield Development Corp.

PROPERTY

The greening of schools

GREEN SCHOOL DESIGN IS GAINING popularity in many countries.

Green schools integrate sustainable design principles for the benefit of students to ensure improved performance and achievement in the learning environment. They are designed to provide an ideal learning atmosphere that also provides environmental, health and financial benefits.

Recent studies have shown that green schools addressing vital concerns such as indoor air quality, daylighting and acoustical requirements had positive effects on student performance.

Traditional vs green design

Green schools offer many advantages over traditional school buildings. Reduced energy use is the most widely recognized advantage of green schools. Some examples of energy reduction devices include more efficient lighting, extensive use of daylighting, occupancy and light sensors, more efficient air conditioning and better insulated walls and roofs.

Basic elements

• Site selection

Ideally, green schools should be located in sites with clean air, and be reasonably distant from commercial and/or industrial zones. They must also be easily accessible by public transportation. Wide open spaces and greenery project a relaxed and peaceful mood to a school.

In addition to these, the school's site largely dictates the kind of facilities that the school needs. For example, placing the school in a residential area, which is usually quiet, reduces the need for soundproofing classrooms. If they had been placed in highly urbanized areas, soundproofing would be necessary to block out the sounds of traffic.

Green schools avoid exposure to electromagnetic fields by locating them at least 100 yards away from any transformers or power transmission lines.

Green schools respect the natural features of its site. If the site has significant natural areas, its plants and wildlife areas are mapped out and preserved.

• Energy efficiency

The typical green school can use up to one-third less energy than what traditional schools use. This can be done through better design, more energy-efficient equipment and other efficient measures such as increased insulation.

For example, large classrooms need more artificial lighting, which is why they are discouraged. This is because light coming in from windows on the side(s) of the classroom do not penetrate much into the room. Smaller rooms will be able to maximize the lighting provided by the sun, which is free.

Related to the site selection, if the school is located in a suburban setting with low pollution levels, it will not have to spend for air conditioning. It will simply be unnecessary because given proper window location and design, natural ventilation can be utilized, which is also free.

Today, many schools are using more

GREEN ARCHITRENDS

Amado de Jesus



air conditioning in the classrooms, even for those in nonurban areas with extensive landscaped campuses. Parents and students should not always put a premium on such campuses because air conditioning is never a measure of the school's standards. It is even worse when the air conditioning is used even if the school's location can utilize natural ventilation.

With proper site planning and solar orientation of school buildings, dependence on air conditioning can be greatly minimized, so that it is only during the hot summer months that air conditioning is used, or probably not at all.

If the school must use air conditioners, centralized air conditioning or split-type air conditioners is more efficient than ordinary window-type units.

It is important that air-conditioned rooms be properly sealed at all points. Whenever windows cannot close properly or gaps are present on walls and under doorways, heat can come in. This heat then cancels out with the cool air generated inside. This causes the air conditioners to work harder, which translates into higher electricity usage and inevitably, higher bills.

• Water conservation

Toilets in many schools, especially those in public schools, are not kept clean due to the unavailability of water. Green schools may collect rainwater and recycle it for flushing toilets and irrigating plants. This makes for considerable savings while maintaining hygienic standards. Other strategies are the use of low-flush toilet fixtures and maintaining plants that do not have to be watered too much, if at all.

• Indoor air quality

Green schools make sure that the air entering the building is clean. Ideally, classroom window openings or incoming air ducts should be away from driveways, loading areas, exhaust air ducts and garbage dumping areas.

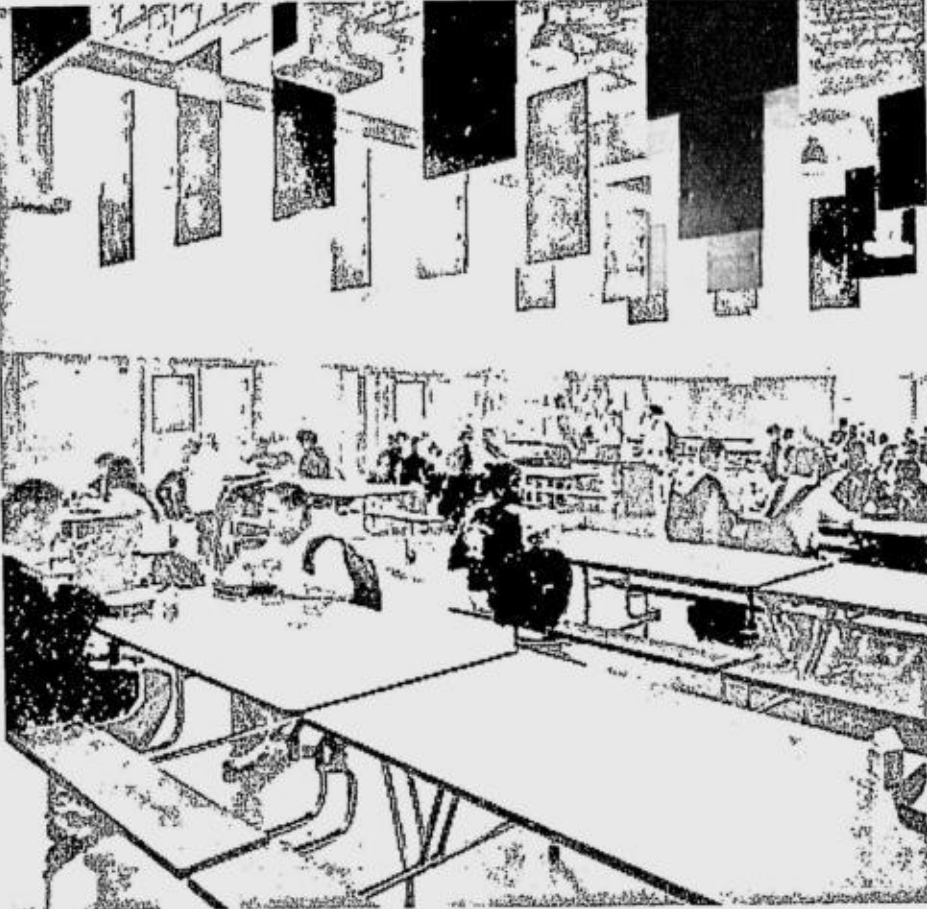
Only nontoxic materials, such as water-based paints, should be used for interior finishes. These products require fewer coats per surface and are durable. They also do not pose any health threat for the students who come into contact with it every day.

Air quality in schools affects young children in particular since they are growing and their organs are developing. They breathe more air relative to their body size than adults, and as a result sustain greater health problems and risks than adults from toxins and pollutants common in schools.

• Acoustics

Green schools minimize noise through the careful arrangement of buildings within the site. Open spaces can be used as barriers to shield buildings from noise. For interior layouts, separate noise-sensitive rooms from less noise-sensitive areas.

Another argument against the use of air conditioning in schools is the noise they make. Quieter technology should



be used in classrooms, and this does not extend to the air conditioning only.

• Daylighting

Green schools have shown that exposure to daylight results in better attendance; reduced noise levels, due to increased concentration levels among the children; and induces more positive moods resulting in better scholastic performance and health benefits such as less tooth decay, which can be partly attributed to the natural vitamins present in sunlight.

• Operations and maintenance

Green schools are significantly different from traditional schools in this area: maintenance. Once the systems are in place, it is important to ensure that the building is functioning based on the agreed specifications, including monitoring energy use and conservation.

For ease in maintenance, linoleum floor is preferred and installed rubber flooring in high traffic areas is recommended. Rubber floors last longer and require less maintenance.

The presence of large trees on campus is beautifying, and it also serves as a natural shelter from the sun. It is a cheaper and natural substitute for building concrete sheds.

• Education

Students perform better on tests in green schools and they motivate teachers to remain teaching there.

The most exciting feature of green schools, however, is their potential as an educational tool. Students can learn sustainable principles not only by theory but also through positive hands-on experience. They will be able to explore with curiosity the entire school, which acts as a huge laboratory for learning, whose lessons go far beyond the traditional classroom.

For comments or inquiries, e-mail amadodejesus@gmail.com.

THIS cafeteria is able to use natural daylight, reducing its energy consumption and electricity bill.

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NATIONAL HOME MORTGAGE FINANCE CORPORATION

INVITATION TO PREQUALIFY

Interested parties are invited to submit proposals to participate in the Joint Venture Program for foreclosed and dacion en pago properties herein listed. For inquiries, please contact the Special Projects Task Force at Telephone Nos. 892-5758 or 893-1501 Loc. 350/369.

REF. No. :	PROPERTY LOCATION	GROSS AREA (in SQ.M.)	NO. OF LOTS/UNITS
001	VILLA VICTORIA SUBDIVISION BRGY. BULO, VICTORIA, TARLAC	15,427	186
002	MALINO VILLE SITIO MALINO, PANIPUAN SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA	22,223	259
003	VILLA STA. BARBARA II BRGY. MINIEN WEST STA. BARBARA, PANGASINAN	9,257	142
004	CHRISTINE VILLAGE II RAGPATAN DIST. I CAUAYAN, ISABELA	30,352	111
005	GREEN MEADOW SUBDIVISION ILAGAN, ISABELA	15,320	100
006	ESGUERRA VILLAGE POBLACION, TALavera NUEVA ECIJA	107,907	1,259
007	BAHAYANG SAN JOSE BAGONG SIKAT, SAN JOSE OCC. MINDORO	70,738	647
008	CHRISTINE VILLAGE III BRGY. BAGAHABAG, SOLANO NUEVA VIZCAYA	49,277	523
009	SUBIC HILLS II ANINGWAY, SUBIC, ZAMBALES	74,031	378

STANDARD RULES AND REGULATIONS

- NHMF reserves the right to reject any or all proposals or part thereof, to waive any informality and deficiency therein, and award or accept proposals as may be considered most advantageous to the Corporation.
- Acceptance of pre qualification documents shall be until January 15, 2007.
- Interested parties are required to inspect the properties prior to the submission of proposals.
- NHMF shall not entertain agents and brokers under the program. For further information and clarification on the rules, please call us at:

ACQUIRED ASSETS BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
c/o ROSABELLA C. JOSE
Special Projects Task Force
At Telephone Nos. 892-5758 or 893-1501 loc. 350/369
NHMF 2nd Floor Filomena Building, 104 Amorsolo Street,
Legaspi Village, Makati City

Awesome views at Manhattan Garden City

WHEN YOU'RE BUYING A CONDO, THE VIEW is one of your primary considerations. Definitely the view that you will wake up to every single day and the bright city lights that will make your nights stand out must be awesome.

"Your view must be picturesque, expansive and pleasing to the senses. At our prime residential project called Manhattan Garden City, you'll have a spectacular view anytime of the day," promised Megaworld Central Properties Inc. president Anthony Charlemagne Yu.

Best views of nature

According to Yu, the first tower of this new city, Manhattan Parkway Residence, gives the best views of nature: the lush greenery of Quezon City and of ever changing cloud formations passing by the Sierra Madre mountains further north. These make mornings even more beautiful for residents of the prime units facing the city view side and the University of the Philippines-Diliman campus.

The location of Manhattan Garden City within the Araneta Center not only gives spectacular views but also puts residents at the very center of Metro Manila. From their plush units, they can easily reach any point of the metro via the LRT2 and MRT3. Incidentally, the Araneta Center is the only point in the metropolis where two mass train transit systems converge.

Thus, once you reside in Manhattan Garden City, getting to your Ortigas or Makati business meeting will be a breeze. The kids will also be near top schools such as UP and Ateneo. Binondo's discount haven will only be a half hour



A LAGOON-SHAPED pool lies amid a verdant setting at the Manhattan Garden City podium deck.



LANDSCAPED walkways connect Manhattan Garden City residents to the train stations and to any point of the metropolis.

away. Once your day is done, a quick train ride brings you home. Your mobile lifestyle also gives you more quality time to spend with the whole family at the various amenity areas of the podium deck.

5-hectare nature resort

The fully landscaped fourth floor podium deck boasts of a five-hectare nature resort setting. A short walk along the nature paths and you'll be taking a dip at the lagoon-shaped pool. Listen to the birds chirp as you jog along the trails. Take a brisk walk along the trellises to energize your day.

"Only at Manhattan Garden City will you have access to the biggest garden in the metropolis at five hectares. And upstairs, you'll have amazing views of the lush greenery of Quezon City and the thickly forested mountains," Yu shared.

Only a few select units in studio, 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom configurations have amazing city views and boast of serene, relaxing views of the Sierra Madre mountain range. To check out these wonderful views yourself, visit the Manhattan Garden City showroom at the third level of Gateway Mall soon.

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Republic of the Philippines
ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE AUTHORITY
San Ramon, Zamboanga City

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

ONE (1) LOT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF WATER THEME PARK WITH AMENITIES AT THE ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE 2nd INDUSTRIAL PARK

The Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority (ZCSEZA), through the Corporate Operating Budget (COB) for CY 2006 intends to apply the sum of SIX MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS ONLY (P 6,750,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the project: One (1) Lot Design and Construction of Water Theme Park with Amenities at the ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE 2nd Industrial Park. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

The ZCSEZA now calls for the submission of Letters of Intent (LOIs) from potential Bidders to apply for eligibility for the aforesaid projects. Bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type and cost of the contract, have completed a similar contract with a value of at least fifty percent (50%) of the ABC, and meet the other minimum eligibility requirements stated in the Eligibility Documents. Interested Bidders must submit their LOIs and secure the Eligibility Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Hundred Pesos (P200.00). Applications for eligibility will be evaluated on a "pass/fail" basis. Only those Bidders passing the eligibility check will be entitled to purchase the Bidding Documents upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Two Thousand Five Hundred Pesos (P2,500.00).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activity	Date/Venue
Issuance of Eligibility Documents	January 2-8, 2007
Deadline for Submission & Opening of Eligibility Documents	January 9, 2007 - 10:00 AM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE Building, Z.C.
Issuance of Bid Documents	January 10-16, 2007
Pre-Bid Conference	January 17, 2007 - 10:00 AM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE Building, Z.C.
Submission, Receipt & Opening of Bids	January 29, 2007 - 10:00 AM, AVR, 3rd Floor, ZAMBOANGA CITY SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE Building, Z.C.

Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address and dates stated above. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following form:

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
Cash, Certified Check, Cashiers' Check, or Manager's Check	One Percent (1%)
GSIS Surety Bond	Two and a half Percent (2 1/2%)

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) or Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted, unless otherwise stated, to organizations with at least seventy-five percent (75%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines. In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184, only Bids from eligible Bidders will be opened.

In accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184 a contract will only be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder who was determined as such during post-qualification. The ZCSEZA reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

(Sgd.) GEORGINA PANTALEON-YU
Chairman and Administrator
Zamboanga City Special Economic Zone Authority
Administration Building, San Ramon, Zamboanga City
(062) 992-0409, (062) 993-0209
E-mail: Ecozone_bac@yahoo.com

(PDI - December 23, 2006)

FOR SALE

CUBAO LOT BANAHAW/EDSA
1,108 SQM 26M FRONTAGE
IDEAL FOR RESIDENTIAL
COMMERCIAL BLDG.

CONDOMINIUM UNIT
PARAGON PLAZA CONDOMINIUM
EDSA COR. RELIANCE ST., MANDALUYONG CITY
TWO (2) BEDROOMS • TWO (2) TOILET & BATH
ONE (1) MAID'S ROOM w/ TOILET & BATH
AREA - 110.20 SQM w/ PARKING

0917-5203619 • 426-0094 • 636-1379 / 81 ASK 4 TEEN

WANTED FEMALE CAREGIVER

• Age 20-35
• Can speak Japanese language
• Free board & lodging
• w/ good salary
Call or text
to 0926-700-3959
or email -
nagatacho_sl@yahoo.co.jp

ERRATUM

In the Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas published last Dec. 21, 2006, details and checklist of eligibility requirements may be obtained from Dec. 21, 2006 to Jan. 12, 2007 and not as published.

Our apologies.

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JEWELRY
DIAMONDS**

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Secondo Gionetta 1
Tel# 894-0282
Agencia de Makati
Tel# 889-7956

More Classifieds

**National
Home
Mortgage**

Page B7



Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON
Provincial Capitol Malaybalay City
Tel. # 088-221-4820 & Telefax # 088-221-2537
OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR
Bids and Awards Committee

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/manufacturers/distributors/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder projects:

- Name of Projects:
- Project I Reference # 300-06-36 - Supply, Delivery & Installation of Medical Equipment
 - Project II Reference # 300-07-01 - Supply, Delivery & Installation of Medical Equipment
 - Project III Reference # 300-06-37 - Supply, Delivery & Installation of Computer Hardware
 - Project IV Reference # 300-07-02 - Supply, Delivery & Complete Installation of 1 unit Generator Set
 - Project V Reference # 300-07-03 - Contract for Security Services

Description and Location of the Project:

- Project I Made in Germany, USA, Japan & Korea only for the use of BPH-Malaybalay, BPH-Maramag & BPH-Manolo Fortich
- Project II Made in Germany, USA, Japan and Korea only for the BPH-Maramag, North Poblacion, Maramag, Bukidnon
- Project III Computer Hardware Requirements for the Bukidnon Provincial Health System for all Bukidnon Provincial Hospitals except in Manolo Fortich, & 14PHS & PEEDMO
- Project IV Unit must be in USA or approved equal from Europe (15KVA, 230 Volts, Phase Three (3) and 60 Hertz for BPH-Maramag
- Project V To secure Government properties within the Province of Bukidnon

Approved Budget for the Contract:

- Project I Thirty One Million Seventy Six Thousand Seven Hundred Seventy Four Pesos (P 31,076,774.00)
- Project II Thirty Eight Million Forty Eight Thousand Six Hundred Sixty Six Pesos (P 38,048,666.00)
- Project III Eight Million Three Hundred Forty Eight Thousand Four Hundred Eighty Nine Pesos (P 8,348,489.00)
- Project IV One Million Seven Hundred Twenty Six Thousand Four Hundred Fifty Pesos (P 1,726,450.00)
- Project V Two Million Six Hundred Ninety Five Thousand Pesos (P2,695,000.00)

Project Completion/Duration:

- Project I Sixty (60) Calendar Days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed
- Project II Sixty (60) Calendar Days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed
- Project III Twenty (20) Calendar Days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed
- Project IV Sixty (60) Calendar Days upon receipt of Notice to Proceed
- Project V February to June 2007

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last 2 years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Performance Security, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule	Venue
1. Advertisement	December 15-26, 2006	Newspaper of Nationwide Circulation, Provincial Website, GEPS, Vicinity of PGSO, PGO, PTO & BAC Office
2. Pre-bidding Conference	December 22, 2006	PGSO, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon
3. Issuance of Bid Documents	December 18-29, 2006	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
4. Opening of Bids Deadline for Submission of Bids	January 3, 2007 Not later than 9:00 a.m.	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
5. Bid Evaluation	January 5, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
6. Post Qualification	January 8, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City
7. Notice of Award	January 10, 2007	BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol, Malaybalay City

Bid documents will be available to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable Bid documents fee in the amount of Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00) / project for project nos. 1 and II, Three Thousand Pesos (P3,000.00) for project No. III, One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00) for project No. IV and Two Thousand Pesos (P2,000.00) for project no. V.

For inquiry, Please call Telephone Nos. 088-221-2537 and 088-221-4820.

The Provincial Government of Bukidnon assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

Approved:
(Sgd.) JOSEFREDE F. FLORES
BAC Chairman

(PDI - December 16 & 23, 2006)



PNOC-ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
Tel. No. 893-1320, Local 5282

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation is inviting all interested suppliers to apply and submit sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the following:

- 56 pcs. of 15 kVA Step-Down Transformers under FGJ 60702 Approved Budget PHP 3,000,000.00
- Various Sizes of Expanding Gate Valves under FGC 61703 PHP 2,976,500.00
- 4 pcs. of 10" x 600S Expanding Gate Valves under FGT 64555 PHP 3,943,000.00

Eligibility forms and bidding documents shall be available for issuance at the above address c/o Ms. Maria Cristina Lynn M. Mercado starting December 22, 2006 and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P400.00 per document.

For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall be held on December 20, 2006 for FGJ 60702, FGC 61703 and FGT 64555, 2:00 P.M. at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to, and registered with the PNOC-EDC Supply Management Department at the above address, and thereafter dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than 2:00 p.m. (Supply Management Department Wall Clock Time) of January 10 for FGJ 60702, January 11 for FGT 64555 and January 12, 2007 for FGC 61703. Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. Late bids shall not be accepted.

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to the bidding terms and conditions, as required, and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of PNOC-EDC. All bids should be within the Approved Budget for the Contract in order to qualify.

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground(s) for PNOC-EDC's action.

Chairman - Bids and Awards Committee I

(PDI - December 23, 2006)



Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
DY Int'l Bldg., 1650 San Marcelino
cor. General Malvar St., Malate, Manila

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
UNOCAL PHILIPPINES, INC. 14/F Building Ayala Ave., San Lorenzo Village, Makati City	Danny Lee Hopkins	Manager, Operational Excellence / Health, Environment, Safety and Security
V GLOBAL PHILIPPINES, INC. 20/F Robinson's Equitable ADB Ave., cor. Poveda St., San Antonio, Pasig City	Renu Gidoomal	Consultant
SCC NAUTICAL TRANSPORT SERVICES INC. Unit 508 Hagdang Bato Townhomes, F. Ortigas St., Mandaluyong City	Robert Scott Cole	General Manager
CHINA WUYI CO. LTD. 15/F Victoria Bldg., 429 U.N. Avenue, Ermita, Manila	Wenfu Yao	Chief Engineer
CHINA WUYI CO. LTD. 15/F Victoria Bldg., 429 U.N. Avenue, Ermita, Manila	Kaibing Wu	Material Engineer
TOTAL GAMING TECHNOLOGIES, INC. 2102 West Tower, PSE Center, Ortigas Ctr., Pasig City	Nektarios Ntokos-Mouzakis	Chief Finance Officer

If you have any information/objection to the above mentioned application/s please communicate with the Regional Director.

(Sgd.)
LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI - December 23, 2006)

**POEA
24-HR
HOTLINES
722-1144
722-1155**



Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

CONSULTANCY SERVICES ON THE "TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL EVALUATION OF PROJECT PROPOSALS BY PROSPECTIVE QUALIFIED THIRD PARTIES PURSUANT TO SECTION 59 OF THE ELECTRIC POWER INDUSTRY REFORM ACT OF 2001 AND ITS IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS"

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
RURAL POWER PROJECT
CONSULTING SERVICES
GEF Grant No. TF052188

The Government of the Philippines, through the Department of Energy (DOE) with grant assistance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), is implementing the Rural Power Project (RPP). The RPP aims to support reforms and priority investments to meet the needs of rural communities for adequate, affordable and reliable energy services.

Section 59 of the Republic Act No. 9136 otherwise known as the "Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001" or "EPIRA" and Rule 14 of its Implementing Rules and Regulations allow for the entry of other Qualified Third Parties (QTPs) to areas that cannot be immediately provided with electric service by franchised Distribution Utilities. The DOE has issued the necessary policies and guidelines for QTP participation, while the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has already promulgated the regulation rules for QTPs. To date, DOE has received two (2) detailed project proposals from pre-qualified entities that need endorsement to ERC for the issuance of QTP Authority to Operate.

The RPP seeks to undertake the subject Consultancy Services with the objective of assisting DOE in the evaluation of technical and financial proposals of prospective QTPs, particularly the determination of reasonable Full Cost Recovery Rate and the Socially/Approved Retail Rate in accordance to the rules of ERC, among others. The proposed consultancy services will be funded under the Rural Power Project, Grant No. TF052188-PH.

The DOE invites eligible individual Consultants, either local or international, to indicate their interest in providing the services. Each interested Consultant must provide information indicating that he/she is qualified to perform the services by submitting the following: (1) latest Curriculum Vitae; (2) a brief write-up of his/her qualifications related to the assignment, including expertise on the technical and financial design of decentralized mini-/micro-grid projects using diesel-generators, mini-/micro-hydro systems, etc.; and, (3) description of similar assignments and work experience, if any. This assignment is deemed "URGENT" and, if selected, the Consultant must be immediately available for work as soon as possible.

The Consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers published in January 1977 (revised in September 1977, January 1999 and May 2002). Interested Parties may obtain further information from the contact person and address below during office hours 0800 to 1700 hours and submit their Expression of Interest on or before 8 January 2007 (up to 5:00 p.m.).

MYLENE C. CAPONGCOL
Project Director, Rural Power Project
Electric Power Industry Management Bureau
Department of Energy
Energy Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Telephone Numbers 840-2120 or 8401401 local 132
Fax Number: 8402120 or 8405593
Email Address mycaps@doe.gov.ph

(PDI-Dec. 22 & 23, 2006)



Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Center for Health Development - Bicol
BICOL MEDICAL CENTER
BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Naga City
Telephone Nos. (054) 473-89-36
E-mail Address: slopez_bmc@yahoo.com
Fax No. (054) 473-89-36; (054) 811-2227
Website: http://www.doh.gov.ph/bmc/index.htm

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

- The BICOL MEDICAL CENTER, through General Appropriations Act intends to apply specified sum for the Procurement of Security Services for CY 2007 (IAEB No. 2006-016). The Approved Budget for the Contract is THREE MILLION PESOS ONLY (Pn3,000,000.00) (GAA CY 2007).

Sale of Bid Documents	December 22, 2006 to January 10, 2007
Pre-Bid Conference	January 10, 2007 - 9:00 A.M. BMC Library
Bid Opening	January 22, 2007 - 9:00 AM. BMC Library

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid Opening.

- The BICOL MEDICAL CENTER now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the Procurement of Security Services which will commence effective February 15, 2007 until December 31, 2007.

The description of an eligible bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

- Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act No. 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the lowest calculated and responsive bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

- Interested Bidders may obtain further information from BICOL MEDICAL CENTER and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 A.M. to 12:00 Noon; 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M., except weekends and Holidays.

- A complete set of Bidding Document for the project may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of ONE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED PESOS (Pn1,500.00). The method of payment will be in the form of Cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

- Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address, date and time stated above. The bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following forms, in the amount at least equal to and not lower than a percentage of the ABC or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency:

1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit (1% of ABC)
2. Bank Guarantee (1.5% of ABC)
3. GSIS Surety Bond (2.5% of ABC)

Late bids shall not be accepted.

- Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

- The BICOL MEDICAL CENTER reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders

Contact Address BICOL MEDICAL CENTER
Concepcion Pequeña, Naga City
Telephone Nos. (054) 473-8936
E-mail Address: slopez_bmc@yahoo.com
Fax No. (054) 473-8936; (054) 811-2227
Website: http://www.doh.gov.ph/bmc/index.htm

Contact Person ANGELITA A. AGAWA, MPA
Chief Administrative Officer and BAC Chairman

(Sgd.) ANGELITA A. AGAWA, MPA
BAC Chairman

(PDI-Dec. 23 & 29, 2006)



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Compact.

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about the
JobMarket
package at
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loc 514.

Inquirer
Compact
available
in all key
cities
in Luzon.



Here on earth my labours were
The stepping stones to upper air.
Lives that suffer and come right
Are backlit by immortal light.

So Hope for a great Sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a farther shore
Is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles
And cures and healing wells
(Seamus Heaney)
-Nobel Laureate in Literature

Our Beloved

EDGAR COTTLE HAMMERSHAIMB

(January 19, 1949 to December 17, 2006)

His bereaved family and loving wife, **Dra. Luz Elvira Duque Hammershaimb**, children: **Amse, Adrianne Elizabeth** and **Edgar Alexander**, in-laws: Dr. Salvador and Mita, Dra. Nieva and Dr. James Salva, Dra. Grace and Dr. Cayetano Dizon, Cesar and Joyce, Atty. Gonzalo and Atty. Ruth, Cristina and Jose Santos, DOH Secretary Francisco III and Dra. Carol. Nephews, nieces, relatives and friends in the Philippines request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

Services will be held at St. John Neumann Church on Saturday, December 23rd, at 10:30 am. There will also be a viewing at the Hammershaimb home in Radnor Pennsylvania, on Friday, December 22nd, from 4 pm to 8 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be sent to the Holy Family University and to the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.

URICOLA "LOLANG" G. VENTURA

*Peacefully joined our Creator
on December 20, 2006 at the age of 70.*

Her loving husband Romy (†); children and children-in-law Vic & Ian, Tere & Dennis, Max & Gold, Maxie & Teng, Monnette & Ado, Marvin; grandchildren Isabella, Miguel, Martin, Dotee, Ardy, Pauline, Maxine, Benjamin, Jaime, Jethro and Jill and siblings Claudia (†), Virgilio, Valentina, Maning (†) and Canuto; relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Mt. Carmel Shrine Parish, Broadway, New Manila, Quezon City. She will be moved to San Miguel, Bulacan on December 23, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. Interment will be on December 24, 2006 at the San Miguel Bulacan Public National Cemetery after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

IN MEMORIAM

RICARDO L. PARAS

of Tarlac City

Member, Board of Directors and General Manager
Philippine Rabbit Bus Lines, Inc.

Peacefully joined our Lord on December 20, 2006.

His bereaved wife **MILAGROS**, children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters, other relatives and friends, request the pious reader to pray for his eternal rest.

His mortal remains lie in state at the Enriquez Funeral Parlor in Tarlac City.

Interment will be at the Eternal Memorial Park on Tuesday, December 26, 2006 after the Memorial Mass at ten o'clock in the morning, San Sebastian Cathedral, Tarlac City.

"We know
that God
raised the
Lord Jesus
from death.
He will raise
us to life
with Jesus.
He will
present us,
along with
you, to God."
2 Corinthians 4:14

BENITO MEDINA TRINIDAD

*Joined his Creator on December 20, 2006
at the age of 87.*

His loving children **Precy & Boy**; brother **Mer**; brother-in-law **Joe**; nephews and nieces, grandchildren and relatives request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie at La Funeraria Paz, Araneta Ave., Quezon City.

Interment will be on December 24, 2006 at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina at 2 in the afternoon.

Feliciano R. Syyap

*Went home to the Lord
on December 22, 2006 at the age of 91.*

His bereaved wife, Fe; children **Wandrillo & Dolores**, **Cecilia & Alex Diaz**, **Ma. Victoria & Angelito Villaruz**, **Feliciano, Jr. & Lalaine**, **Eduardo (†)**, **Magdalena (†) & Abdon David**; grandchildren and great-grandchildren request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at the family residence at #429 Sarenas St., Sangitan East, Cabanatuan City. Interment will be announced later.

The Board of Directors, Officers and Employees of
Philippine Rabbit Bus Lines, Inc.

condole with the family of our beloved

RICARDO L. PARAS

Member, Board of Directors and General Manager

*who peacefully joined our Lord
on December 20, 2006.*

His bereaved wife **MILAGROS**, children, grandchildren, brothers and sisters, other relatives and friends, request the pious reader to pray for his eternal rest.

His mortal remains lie in state at the Enriquez Funeral Parlor in Tarlac City.

Interment will be at the Eternal Memorial Park on Tuesday, December 26, 2006 after the Memorial Mass at 10:00 a.m., at San Sebastian Cathedral, Tarlac City.

*An obituary with a picture
can be a fitting tribute to
your departed loved one.*

Always caring...

INQUIRER OBITUARIES

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:

- 1 Copy of Death Certificate
- 2 Any identification document (I.D.)

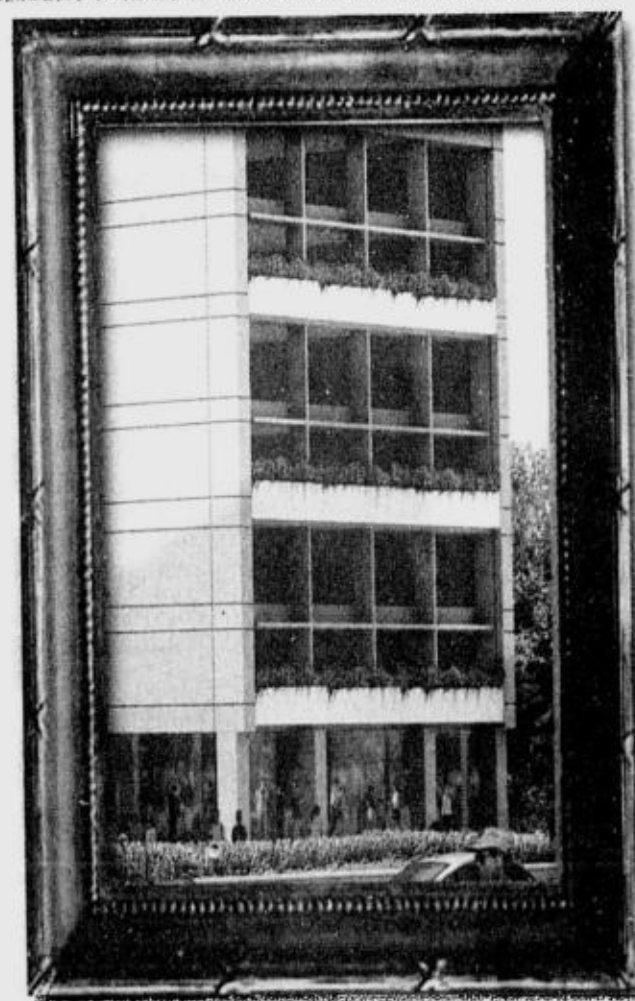
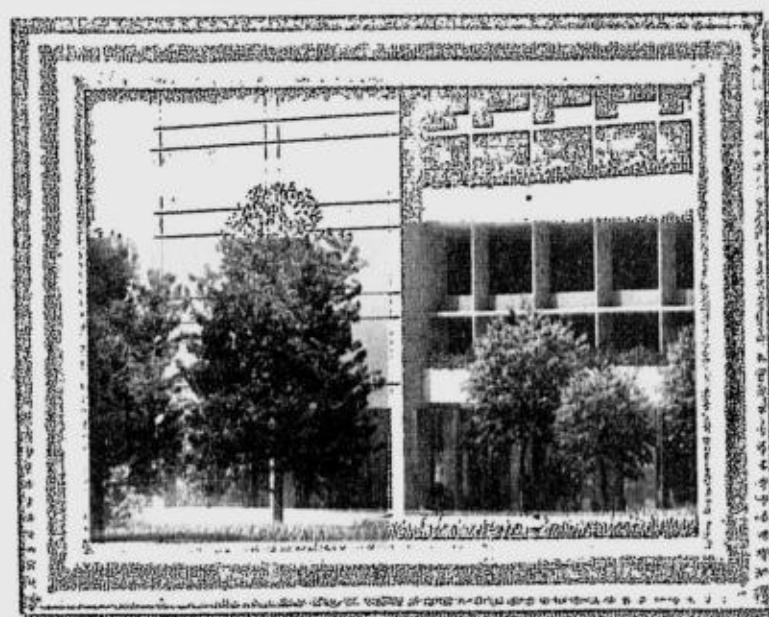
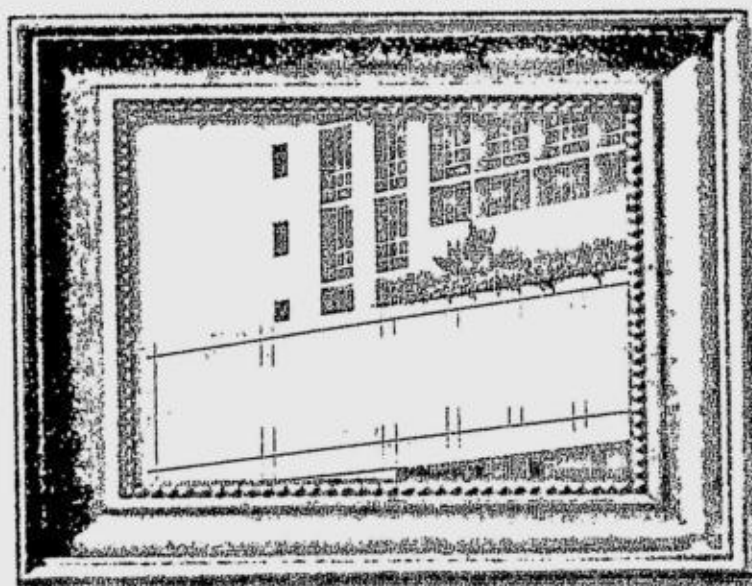
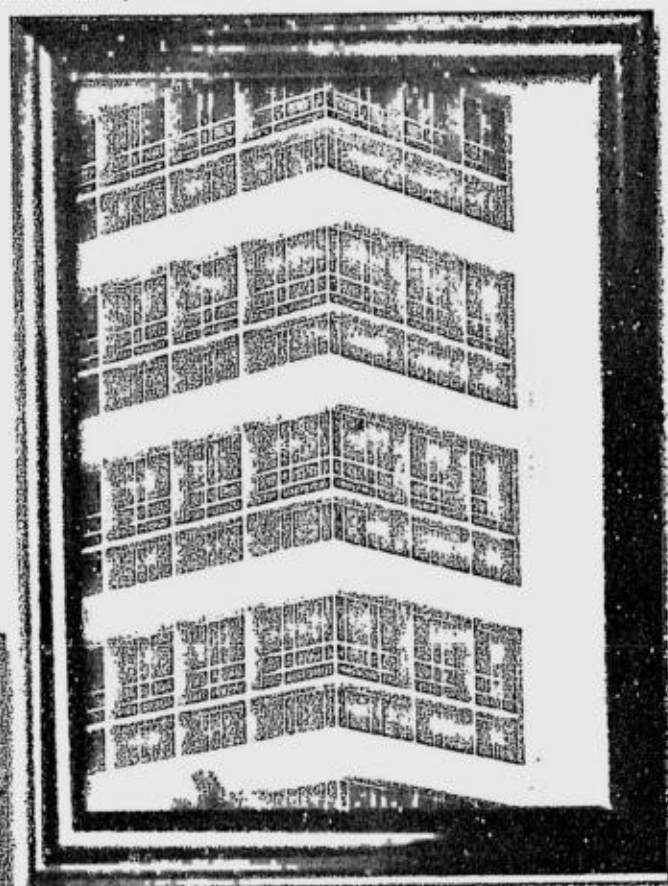
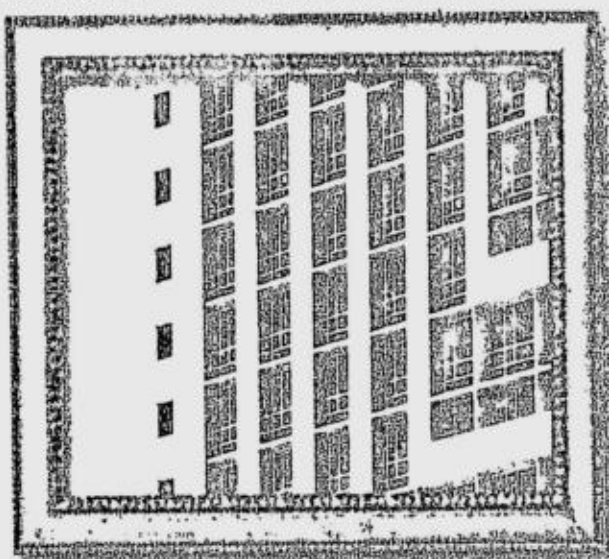
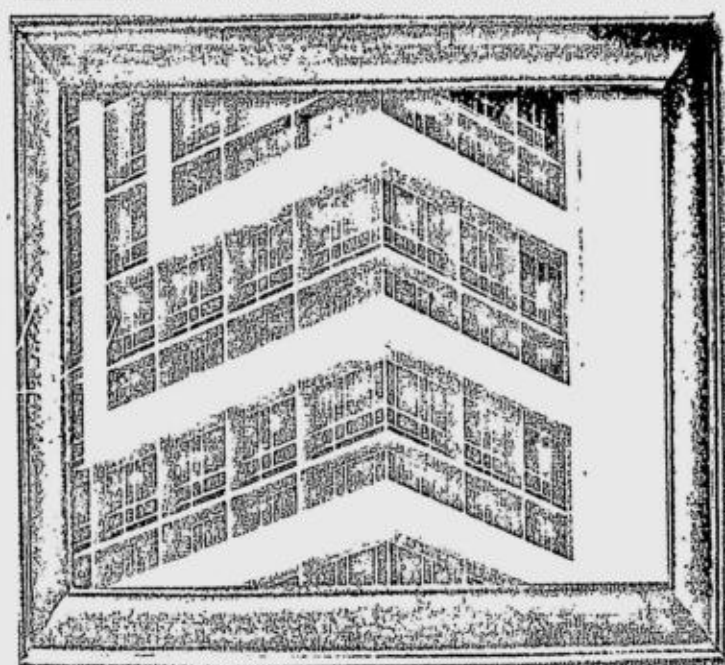
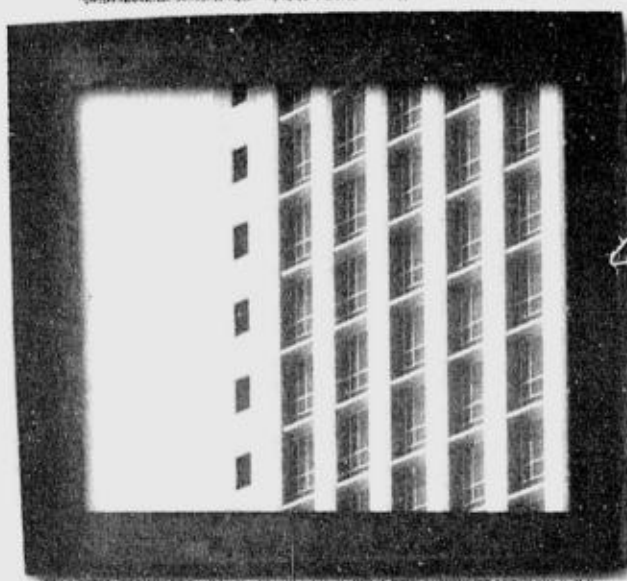
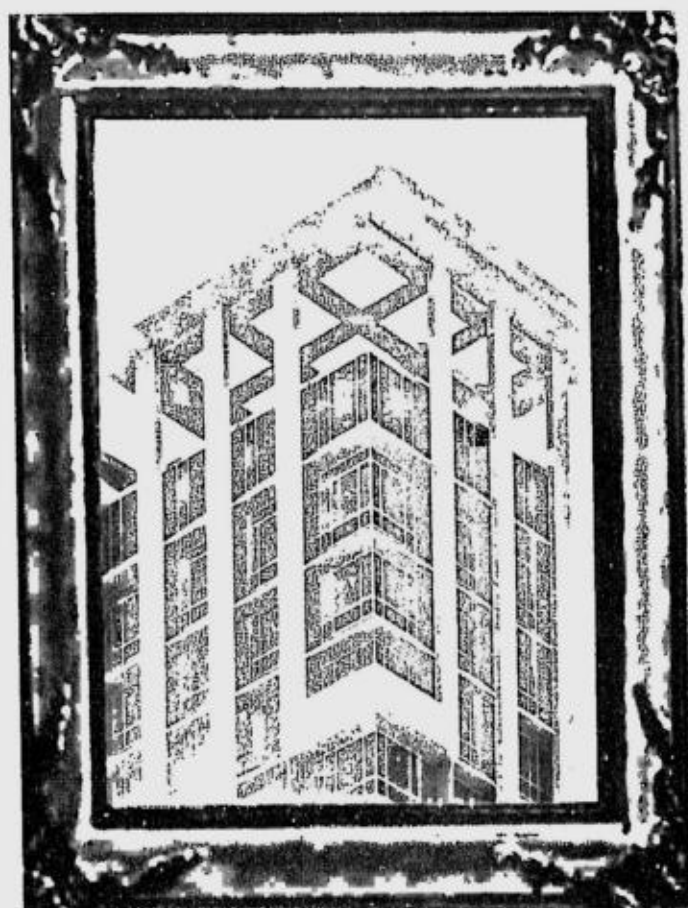
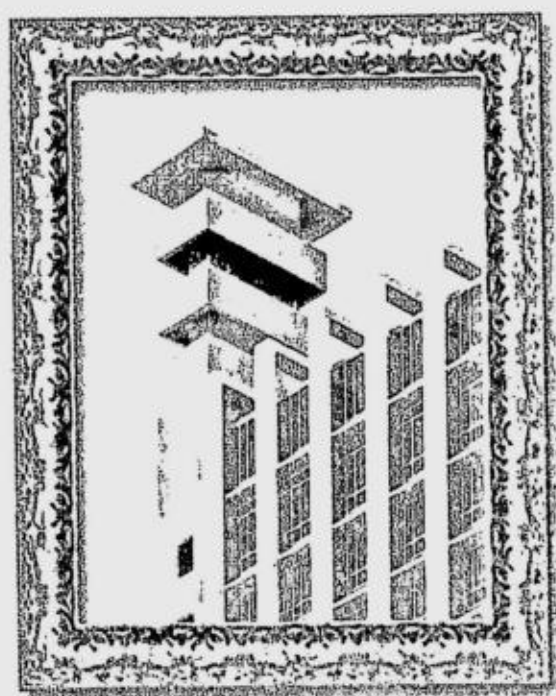
**WE ACCEPT
CREDIT CARDS**
and bank-to-bank payments

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS
DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIMS
FREE OBIT DESIGN

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord." 2 Corinthians 5:8

*A masterpiece
all over.*

Taft W. H. TAFT
RESIDENCES

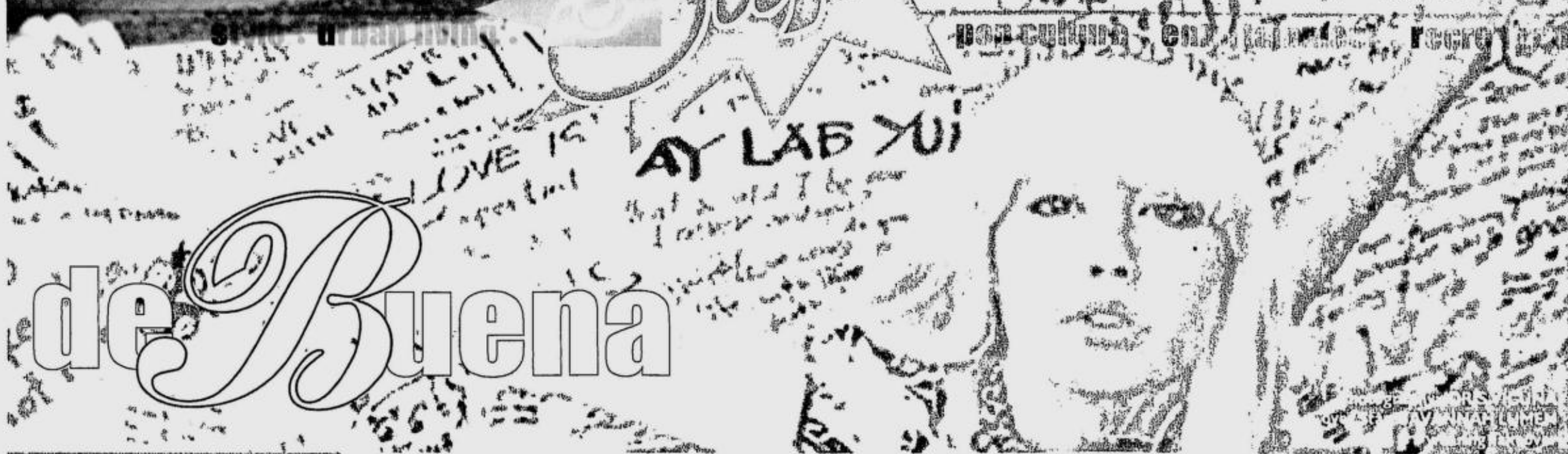


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Super! Countdown

2 days 'til
X-mas!

Tim Yap parties in
Singapore
Tals Diaz shops in
Hong Kong

Savannah Lumen,
a star in style
and music page D2

Zsa Zsa Padilla as
Zalducca

Super says
Vote!

How to be Super! Tip

#1298: Suffrage is Super!

Register to vote

until Dec. 31!

By Pepe Diokno

IF YOU'VE BEEN TUNING INTO THE second most unintentionally funny channel in the country*, ANC, you know that the 2007 elections are on. If you haven't, then yes guys and gals, elections next year for local government spots, all your congressmen, and 12 senators, is pushing through. Jump for joy now. Or not.

But aside from elections next year, with all the hoopla about changing the Constitution, it's possible we might even have a plebiscite—that's when you're asked a yes or no question about whether you agree with a change in the fundamental law of the land. You might be asked whether you want a unicameral congress instead of bicameral (with a House of Representatives and a Senate), or whether you want a President or a Prime Minister. Yeah, you might get to be asked all those fun questions next year!

Anyway, having said all that, and given everything else that's been happening in the world—wars, and corruption, and Mo Twister—it's an extremely important time to be a part of your democracy. It's not even about being part of the dirty world of politics. Voting for your leaders—and voicing your opinion on changes in the Constitution—is not politics; it's picking the people that work for you (Donald Trump scrutinizes every single person he hires. You should too.) Voting is deciding your future. It's exercising a fundamental right.

And stuff.

But the thing is, you, dear Super! reader, won't be able to do all that if you don't register to vote by Dec. 31, 2006. That's one week from now. Don't worry though, registering won't take eons—and if you bring your iPod, you can make it into a party. Comelec people are animals. Party animals, I mean.

Anyway, here are the few things you need to know to be able to register. And remember, this small act will make you the key to a Super future. Register now!

Register if you...

- will be at least 18 years old by May 14, 2007.
- will have been a resident of the Philippines for at least a year by May 14, 2007

How to register:

• Look for the Office of the Election Officer of the city or municipality you live in. If you need help, try calling the Comelec's information department at (+632) 525-9302 / 525-9345 / 525-9252, or your city or barangay hall.

• Go to the Office of the Election Officer anytime between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., even on weekends. Comelec offices will be open on Dec. 30 and 31 (that's a Saturday and Sunday).

• Bring at least one identification document that bears your photograph and signature—like a student ID, a driver's license, or your passport.

• Fill up the application forms legibly. And um, bring your iPod, just in case. :)

For transfers, reactivation, and changes/corrections in voter registration documents, follow the steps above too.

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Subscribe to any SMART Gold Postpaid plan within the promo period, and get a chance to win Philippine Airlines' Mabuhay Miles!

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THIRD PRIZE: 40,000 Mabuhay Miles equivalent to 5 roundtrip tickets to Manila, Aklan

To join, simply register by texting GOLD *Plan Amount* <Name/Address/Age/Gender> to 288 and earn free raffle points upon registration. Promo registration is free of charge. Earn additional raffle points when you download logos, picture messages, wallpapers, greeting cards or ringtones. Just text GOLD to 288 to get a list of available content. (*2.50/msg)

All winners must be registered Mabuhay Miles Members to avail of the prize. Non-winners can apply for a Mabuhay Miles account via www.mabuhaymiles.com. Adjusted mileage awards may be converted to cash if you drop to other destinations. For queries regarding Travel Award booking and redemptions, you may call PAL's Reservation or the Mabuhay Miles Service Center. Mabuhay Miles terms and conditions apply. Visit any SMART Wireless Center nearest you or see posters and flyers for details.

Promo duration: Nov. 30, 2006 to Feb. 28, 2007 Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4858 Series of 2006

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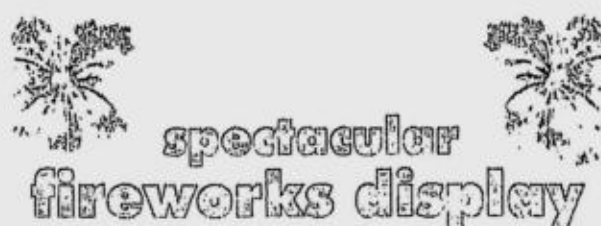
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spectacular

fireworks display

Metro Manila Malls

SM City North Edsa	- Dec. 23, 30 & 31
SM City Fairview	- Dec. 23 & 30
SM Megamall	- Dec. 29
SM City Sta. Mesa	- Dec. 30
SM Southmall	- Dec. 23, 29 & 30
SM City Bicutan	- Dec. 23, 29 & 30
SM City Sucat	- Dec. 23, 29 & 30
SM City Bacoor	- Dec. 23, 29 & 30

Provincial Malls

SM City Baguio, SM City Clark, SM City Marilao, SM City Sta. Rosa, SM Supercenter Molino, SM City Lipa, SM City Batangas, SM City Lucena	- Dec. 23 & 30
SM City Pampanga	- Dec. 23 & 30
SM City Dasmariñas	- Dec. 25 & 30
SM City Cebu	- Dec. 30
SM City Iloilo	- Dec. 23 & 30
SM City Cagayan de Oro	- Dec. 24 & 31

Caroling Cheer

Yuletide choral groups fill the air with their repertoire of joyful Christmas melodies.

Metro Manila Malls Dec. 23-24

- 1st set 1:30 pm - 2 pm
- 2nd set 3:30 pm - 4 pm

LUZON MALLS

SM City Batangas	SM City Dasmariñas
SM City Clark • SM City Lipa	Dec. 23-24
SM City Lucena • SM City Marilao	SM City Pampanga
SM Supercenter Molino	Dec. 23-24
Dec. 23-24	SM City Sta. Rosa
	Dec. 23-24

VIS-MIN MALLS

SM City Cagayan de Oro • SM City Cebu
SM City Davao • SM City Iloilo
Dec. 23-24

Make
merry
music

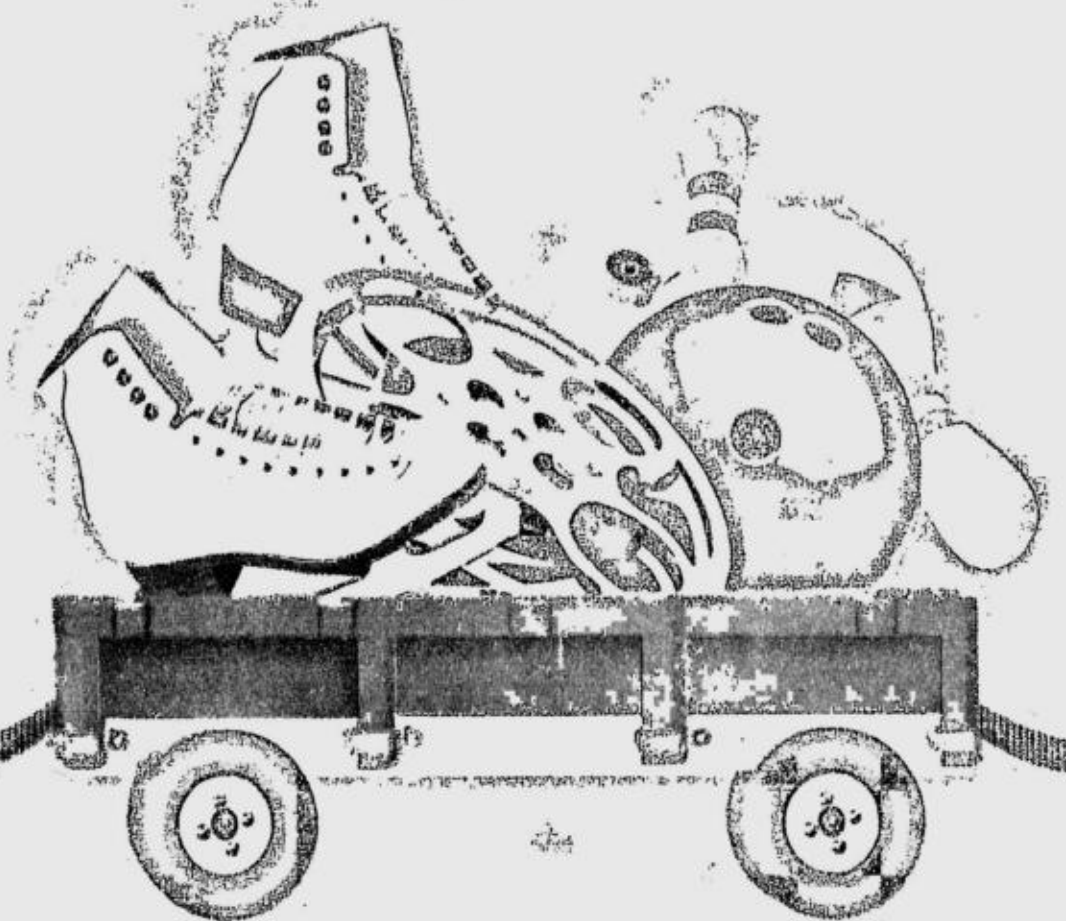
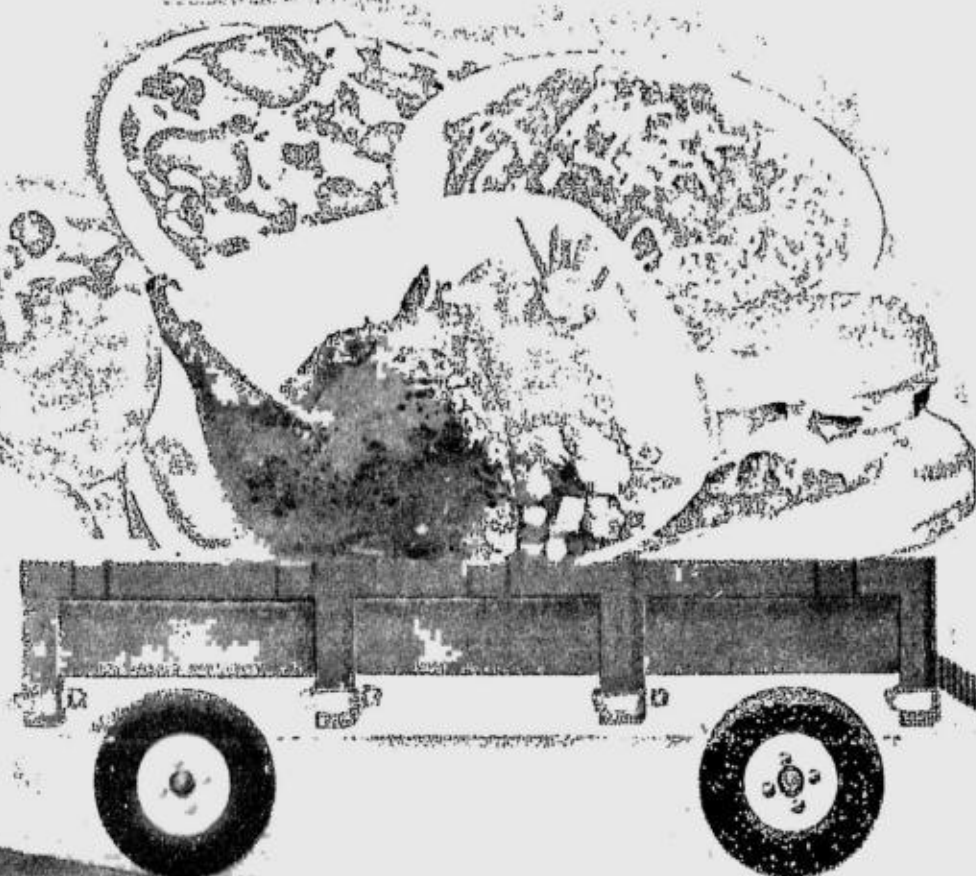


Christmas time is videoke time with friends, family! Xtreme Magic Sing, the handheld videoke microphone, works as a plug & play device with over 2,000 titles. Selections enhanced by scenic background displays and bonus songs by ring hero Manny Pacquiao.

Super way to go this

super eats

super fun

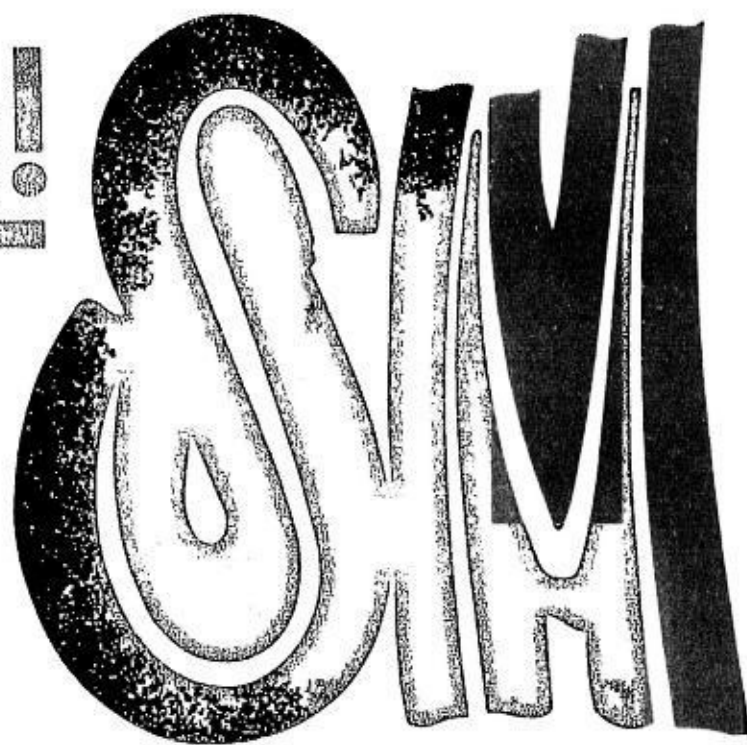


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SUPERMALLS

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Metro Manila Film Festival
MALL TOUR



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Regal Films Movie Caravan

SM City San Lazaro

Dec. 23

Opens December 25 at SM Cinemas

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December 23

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is Christmas!

super shopping



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From fantasy to reality

Text and photos by Tim Yap

FANTASY SEEMS TO BE the predominant theme this holiday season's film festival. From campy crusaders to fairy fantasia, the Philippine silver screen has never gone this glossy—and in spandex at that.

Just a few days ago, Zsa Zsa Padilla made my jaw drop as she came to the pre-party of her latest film fest starrer, *Zsa Zsa Zaturrnah*. Even with volcanic red hair and in full metallic gear, she exuded so much class that you'd think her Maxi Cinco costume came from a High Street brand. Her body was to die for—she's my favorite gym mate at Gold's Gym and she never ceases to amaze me with her energy and non-show biz nonchalant demeanor.

Dra. Vicki Belo (armed with the latest-as-in-no-one-else-has-it type of Louis Vuitton metallic tote) was right beside me and whispered in my ear that it was Zsa Zsa's billboard that gave Mother Lily Monteverde the idea to cast Zsa Zsa as the voluptuous heroin of the gay camp film.

Pops Fernandez reminded me of Cate Blanchett's Ice Queen in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" as she donned her Maxi Cinco with much sass, giving it that high couture touch as our scene's ever-evolving Demi-slash-Madonna counterpart would have it.

Surprise sensation

The movie started at midnight, so I wasn't able to catch it. Even male lead Rustom Padilla, who wore a fully beaded Paul Cabral gown got raves for his dragged out look. I wonder how mommy Eva feels.

From fantasy, we go to reality. It's always heartwarming when a loved one goes out of her way to make her partner feel extra special. And that's what exactly global supermodel Joey Mead did to surprise motel scion Ian King on his birthday. She did it at the back part of Embassy Cuisine, where a replica of Ian's sticker invested car became the cake for the surprise celebration.

And you're reading it here first in Super! Ian and Joey are engaged to tie the knot this 2008! I am so proud to be the one who brought them together and introduced them to each other. Ian has always had a crush on Joey, and now the fantasy has become a reality.

Whata way to celebrate the season—holiglazed and holidayed!



COMEDY CENTRAL
Tim Yap and Dolphy



BOY'S PRIDE
Miguel Martinez



WE THREE KINGS
Atz, Geovy and Ian



D-LIGHT
Dingdong Dantes at the Zsa Zsa premiere



KISSY FIT
Ian King and Joey Mead are about to get married!

Wyeth



This Christmas, the greatest gift you can give your child is long-term protection from IPD, the killer disease.

Donna Cruz-Larrazabal

IPD Key Facts:

IPD kills 1 million children worldwide every year.
IPD can kill within 48 hours.
1 out of 3 children with this disease die of it.

A True Story

Donna Cruz-Larrazabal has the date etched in her mind: September 29, 2002. The whole family was just getting ready for their first Christmas with the newest member of the family, Cian, when she learned her three-year-old Belle had pneumonia.

"I'm not a doctor. *Alam ko lang*, before, *'pag nagkaka-cough si Belle, madali siyang gumaling. Pero* that time, *hindi ko alam na malala na pala iyon*," recounts Donna.

A laboratory test revealed that Belle was struck by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, a common and deadly bacteria that causes Invasive Pneumococcal Disease or IPD. The bacteria can spread through respiratory droplets such as those found in sneezes and coughs. The resulting infection can lead to

major life-threatening illnesses such as meningitis, sepsis and, in Belle's case, pneumonia.

IPD spares no one. Being well-off doesn't save one from the disease. Even the expert care of Donna's husband, a doctor, was not able to protect Belle from the infection.

"That experience made me realize what an important thing it is to have my children vaccinated," Donna concludes. When Belle got well, she rallied to have all her nieces and nephews vaccinated. "*Talagang hindi na makaka-miss ng vaccine schedule ang mga anak ko. Naka-llst na kung kailan ang susunod!*"

Sadly, not all babies receive immunization. According to WHO,

more than a million babies are lost to IPD worldwide every year. In the Philippines, pneumonia is the No. 1 cause of death among children less than 5 years of age.

Infants and toddlers are IPD's most vulnerable victims. That is why it is important to protect them as early as possible. Indeed, there is a way to safeguard your child from this traitor disease.

If you have a child aged 6 weeks to 9 years, ask your doctor about the IPD vaccine. Long-term protection from IPD is the best gift you can give your child this Christmas—and many Christmases to come.

() Yes, I want to know more about IPD! Please send me more information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

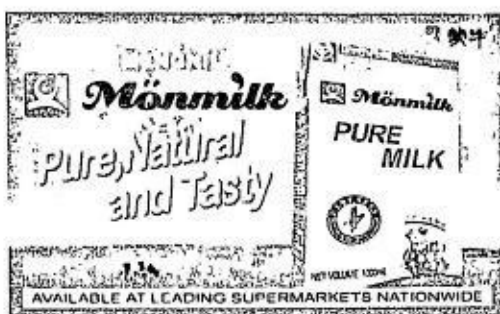
Contact No.: _____

Kindly cut and fax to (632) 8846780 or send to Pharma Division, Wyeth Philippines, Inc. 2236 Chino Roces Avenue, Makati City 1200

ipd
Invasive pneumococcal disease
Ask your doctor about it.



PDI



SATURDAY,
DECEMBER 23, 2006

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(Smart)

E-mail: super@inquirer.com.ph

HO, HO, Hong Kong!

OUT THE WINDOW

Tals Diaz

ALICE IN Wonderland and the Pevenzie children of Narnia would have been great contenders for "The Amazing Race." After all, they knew all about suspending disbelief upon stepping through a door and finding an extraordinary world on the other side. Once there, they adapted to the strange, beautiful and magical landscape, which was quite a refreshing break from the day-to-day realities of sipping tea and weird relatives. And most important of all, they managed to navigate through the other world—with cool new local friends to boot!

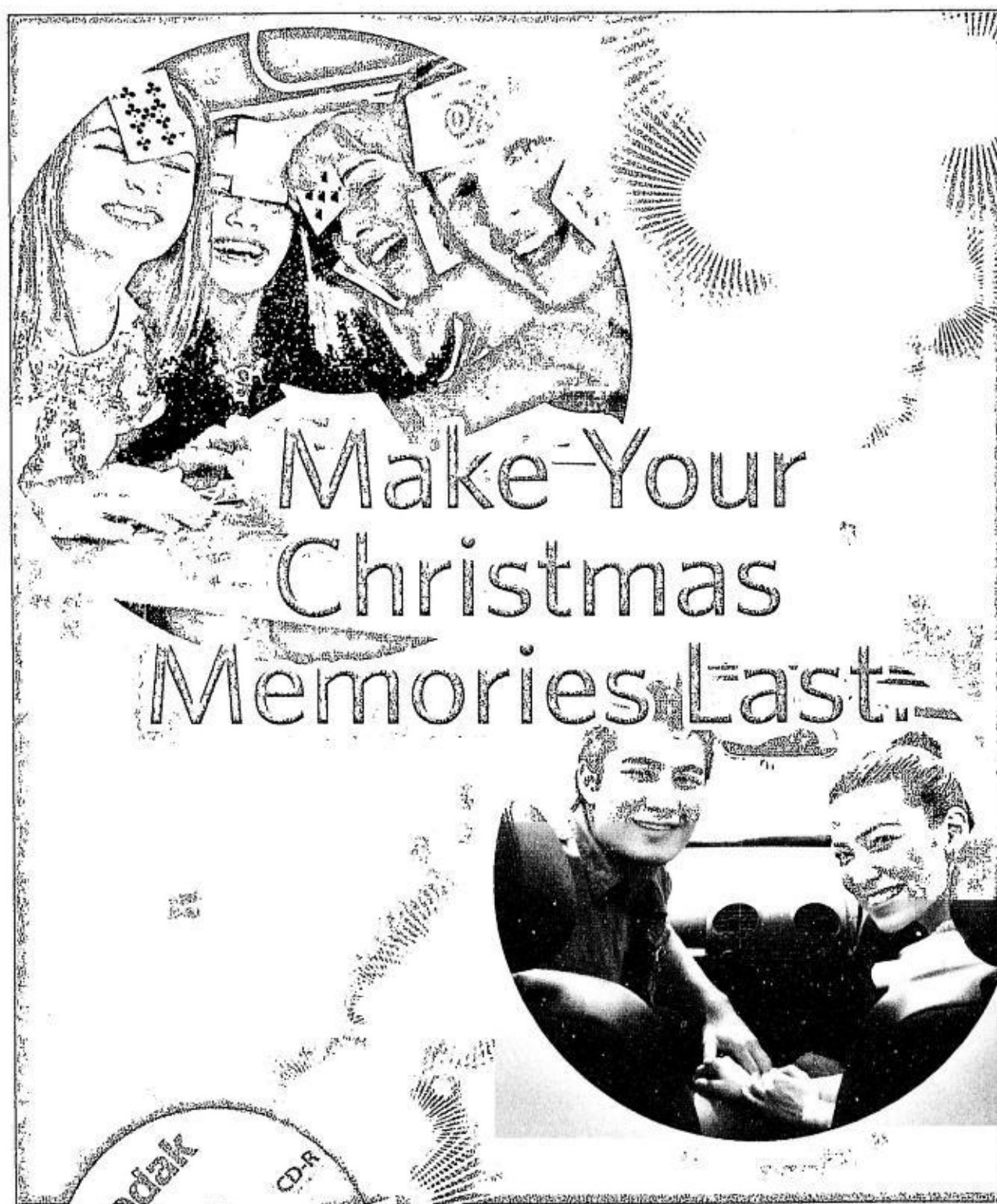
Thus, in the tradition of walking through doors, suspending disbelief, and meeting quirky locals, a certain world-class city invited us to explore its own wonderland in an extraordinary way. The city—sing it with me like Siouxsie and the Banshees—Hong Kong!

This year, the Hong Kong Tourism Board organized their version of the Amazing Race, which was a family adventure challenge around their gorgeous metropolis. From the streets of Nathan Lane, to the star-speckled avenues by the harbor, to the shores of Repulse Bay and the heights of Victoria Peak, selected families from all over South East Asia raced from point to point to take up challenges and solve clues. These teams had won their respective challenges in their countries, namely Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, India, Indonesia and the Philippines, which then qualified them to go toe-to-toe in the Dis-

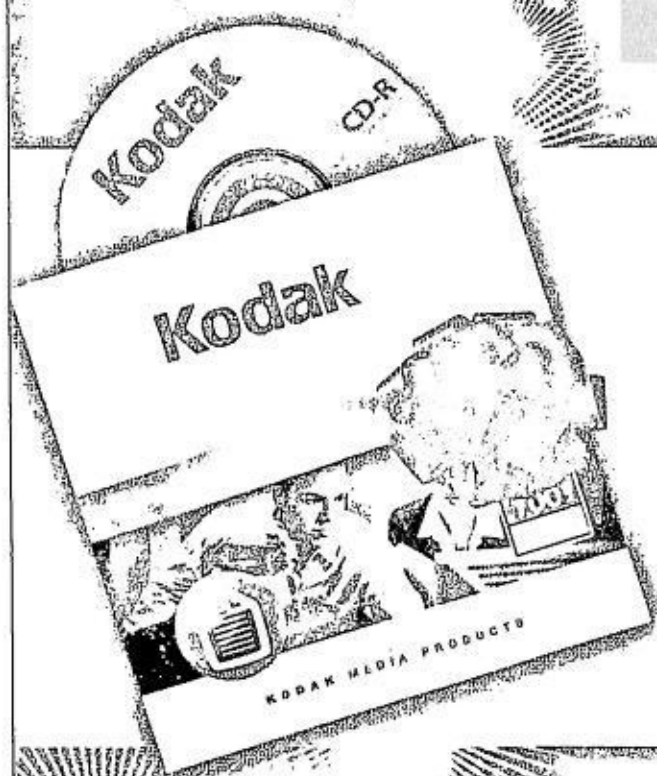
HO, HO/D4



Following the bright light
to the East whereupon I found
a winter wonderland with dim sum



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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 2794, Series of 2006.

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than a partridge
in a pear tree.

"On the Tenth day of Christmas,
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10 Stunning PEBLS and a new
MOTOKRZR for free."

Tune in to your favorite radio station. Listen closely to Motorola's Twelve Gifts of Christmas and follow the DJ's instructions after the song is played. If you can sing the song then correctly answer the DJ's question, you'll get to win cool Motorola gifts and a chance to win the new Motorola KRZR and RZR phones! Better than Ten lords a-leaping and Nine ladies dancing.

Make Motorola's 12 Gifts of Christmas your ring tone and ring back. Just text in the following keywords and send to 2955.

For Truetone text
HELLOMOTO TT 12GIFTS

For Monotone text

HELLOMOTO MT 12GIFTS

For Polytone text

HELLOMOTO PT 12GIFTS

For Ring back

Globe Text **MOTO12GIFTS or 12GIFTS**

and send to 2332

Smart Text **RING ADD 05670**

and send to 286



**MOTOROLA 12 GIFTS
OF CHRISTMAS!**

Savannah's urban takeover

From ear candy to shirt envy

Tim Yap



PHOTOS BY IDRIS VICUNA AND BRENDAN GOCO

WHEN SAVANNAH Lumen opens her mouth, people listen.

The 20-year-old singer has won over audiences with her sultry voice, poignant messages and subtle sexiness.

Thanks to her charms, she has taken over studios, stages, parties and events, catching people's attention and holding on to the spotlight like she can hold her notes. Her voice teacher Kevyn Lettau must be super proud. Party mainstay Martin Ledesma has been urging me to listen to Savannah's new music, which he says "has matured a lot - a definite must-hear, must-keep compilation of songs from the heart."

I have personally witnessed Savannah's growth as an artist and I feel a certain kind of elation as I see her find herself more through her music, and now, fashion.

Savannah is ready for a different kind of takeover now. She and friends - Michael Vicente, PJ Martinez and Rod Anthony - will open The Takeover in Manila. "The Takeover aims to revive the heart of urban independent business," said Savannah. "We want to give Manila a taste of LA street fashion this holiday. They no longer have to fly to Hong Kong, New York, Japan or LA to get their favorite streetwear brands." In conjunction with the I Love You Store, The Takeover shop,

which will be located in Makati, will carry streetwear brands from Los Angeles - Obey, Fuct, Emortal and Plain Gravy - and limited edition Nike shoes.

"We're bringing them home, baby!"



Savannah Lumen underneath it all



MAXIM'S MANUAL. Rovilson Fernandez and RJ Ledesma

ETC EXCITES. Georgia Cotaco and Bing Santos

ALL GOOD. Liberty Gutierrez and Ruel Villegas

LET'S BRING sexy back

FHM BURNING. Lou Albano of FHM and Denise Mallabao of Burn

CHANNEL V VJ Sarah Tan

CUTIES everywhere just lying on the beach

OUR VERY OWN. VJ Colby Montoro is MTV's biggest male star

ALISTER. Alvin Alfonso (now Pulga) is now based in Malaysia where he is a Channel V VJ

A UNIQUELY 'HIP' SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

Zouk me hard

Text and photos by Tim Yap

A RECORD NUMBER OF 20,000 partiphiliacs gathered at Silosa Beach in Sentosa to punt and pounce at this year's Zouk Out - the biggest party this side of Asia.

"Uniquely Hip" is Singapore's new battle cry, and so they got top name DJs Steve Lawler and Ferry Corsten to topbill this year's giant music festival. What the Singaporeans didn't know was that right before their hired DJ superstars hopped over to the Lion City, they partayed their asses off in Manila, where the legal drinking and smoking age are virtually nonexistent. But still, I look up to sunny Singapore because they are a blinged-up benchmark of what our scene can be - nocturnal and otherwise.

"This is the most fun party without drugs!" I overheard one punter say. Now I realize why bars and clubs do really well in this city. Singaporeans love their alcohol and it gives them their right kick. No supplements here (only Red Bull, if you can consider that your upper), a perfect detox from intoxicating Manila.

Our "hip tour" ironically began with the Hippo bus where our guide showed us a lit up tour of Orchard Road, Christmas style. Then, our tour bus driver decided to play DJ and began our trip to Sentosa by giving us an overdose of Lionel Ritchie, Debbie Gibson and Boy George.

Zouk me now

When we got to the venue, giant tents were set up inside the festival where a smorgasbord of music and madness filled the air. DJ superstar Ferry Corsten was my

favorite (he plays for us this December 25 at the World Trade Center). Hip hop royal DJ Jazzy Jeff was also there, but his set was kinda cheesy. Steve Lawler didn't give me my musical peak, and I think I even heard the song "Celebration" in one tent - I thought Side A or Hyperbeat was the featured performer. Oh well, the humongous event was packaged as a festival, so to each his own musical taste.

Still, aside from club legend Zouk, Singapore boasts of a giant Ministry of Sound, a newly transformed power station now turned multi-level nightspot called St James Power Station and the newly opened fanfished fun at Clarke Quay. The Cannery, a hip strip along the newly spruced up Clarke Quay seduces partyphiles with sexy new venues - Barfly, Bice, Fashion Bar, Hed Kandi Bar, and more. Still, my favorite spot for beautiful peeps watching is Attica, and for interiors, the Forbidden City.

And that's not all. Singapore is bringing Ibiza to its city by taking in Cafe Del Mar into its manmade Sentosa resort. But what's really impressive about this city, aside from their well-planned urban development, is the fact that here, meritocracy is the way of living. It's the "everyone-for-himself-but-we're-all-in-this-together" attitude - may it be on the party side or otherwise that really pulls them together and makes them move forward in leaps and bounds.

Now if that doesn't increase Singapore's hip quotient, I don't know what will. Hip, hip, hooray for Singapore!



VEGETARIAN delight. Green is sooo in

No Sales of Tobacco to Person under 18

STRICT RULES STILL APPLY. Even if this is Singapore's biggest party

MONSTER MANIA. Stilted cupid, stop picking on me



GLITTER DO. Body buddies at the beach



BRAZILIAN INVASION. Yes, even in Singapore



THIS IS the way to eat it

HIGHLY SPIRITED. Abba, Spencer Ty and JP Obligation.



MUSIC BUFFED. VJ Alvin, DJ Jazzy Jeff and Tim Yap



SAMURAI SELECTION. Costumed revelers filled the halls with boughs of folly



MASSAGE SPACES dominated the party venue—for party fatigue



COKE ADDS LIFE. That's what his shirt says.

SCHO Parpan Richardson is the star of the Singapore party scene



STRICT RULES STILL APPLY. Even if this is Singapore's biggest party

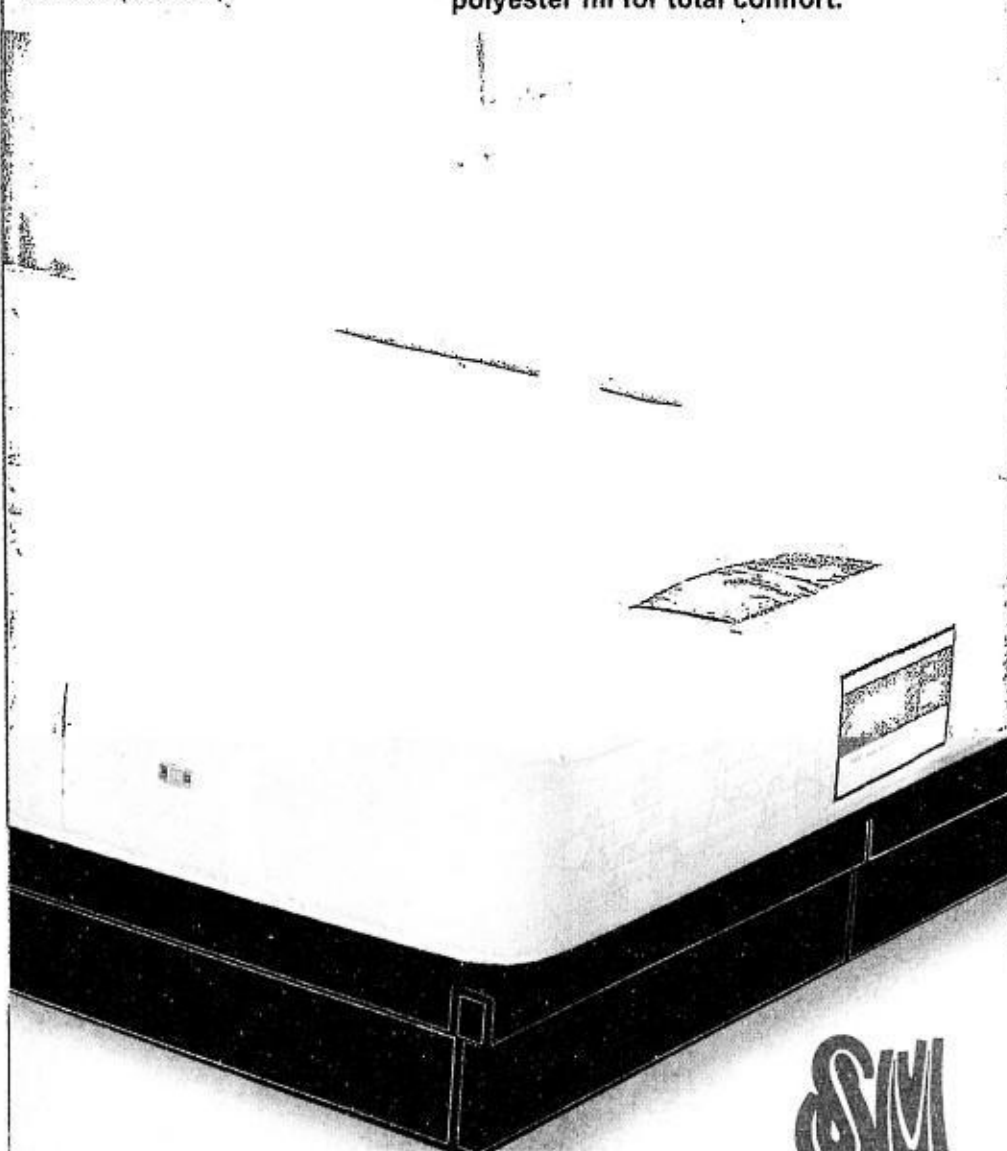


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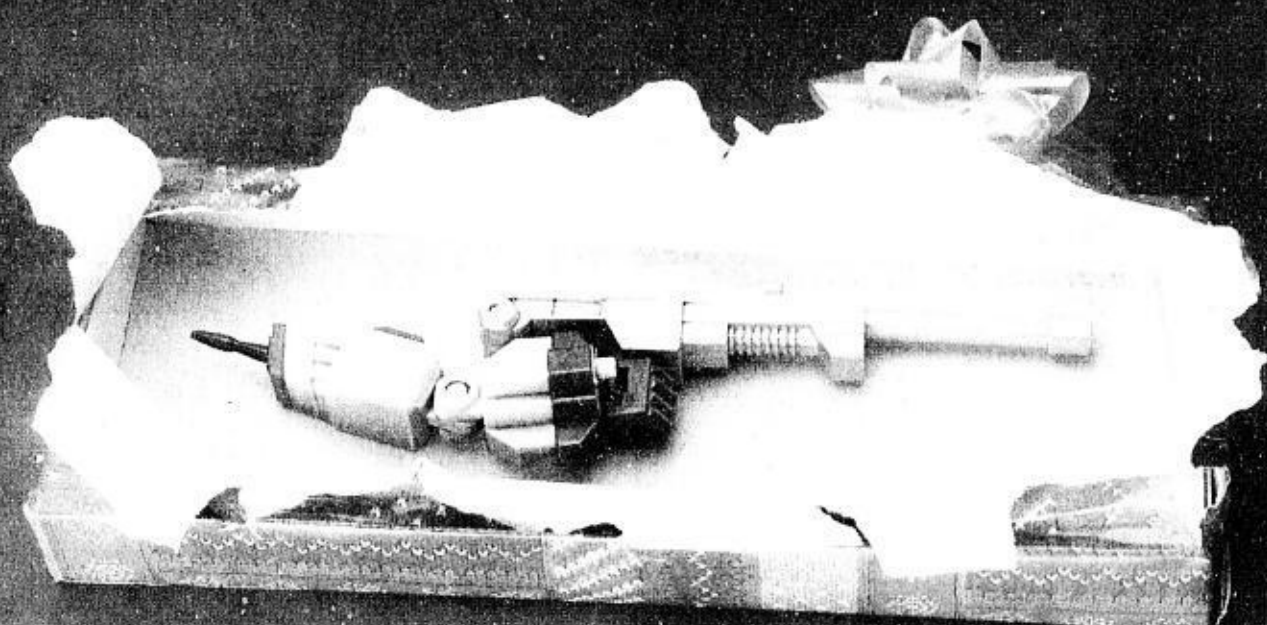


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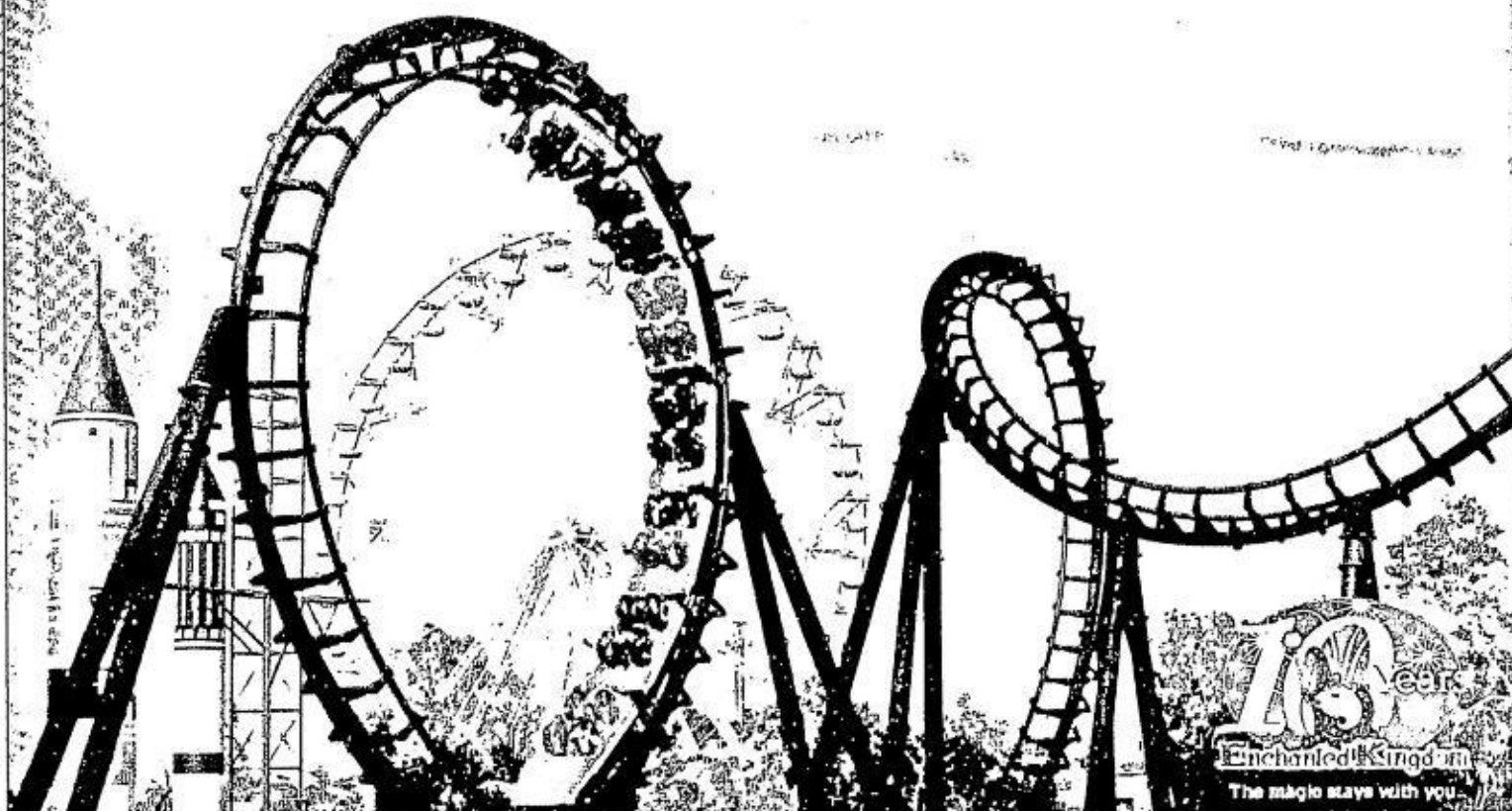
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than a partridge
in a pear tree

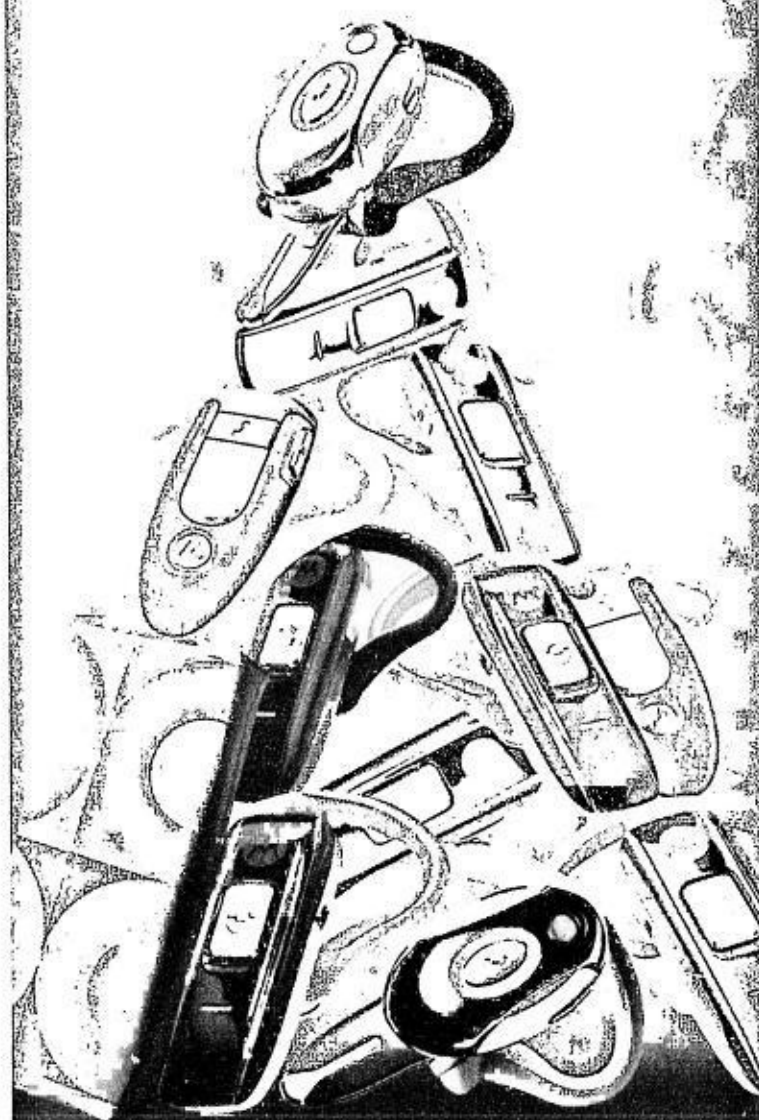
On the Eleventh day of
Christmas, my Moto gave to me
Bluetooth Headsets and a
new MOTOKRZR for free.

Tune in to your favorite radio station. Listen closely to Motorola's Twelve Gifts of Christmas and follow the DJ's instructions after the song is played. If you can sing the song then correctly answer the DJ's question, you'll get to win cool Motorola gifts and a chance to win the new Motorola KRZR and R1ZR phones! Better than Eleven pipers piping and Ten lords a-leaping.

Make Motorola's 12 Gifts of Christmas your ring tone and ring back. Just text in the following keywords and send to 2955.

For Truetone text
HELLOMOTO TT 12GIFTS
For Monotone text
HELLOMOTO MT 12GIFTS
For Polytone text
HELLOMOTO PT 12GIFTS

For Ring back:
Globe: Text **MOTO12GIFTS** or **12GIFTS**
and send to 2332
Smart: Text **RING ADD 105670**
and send to 286

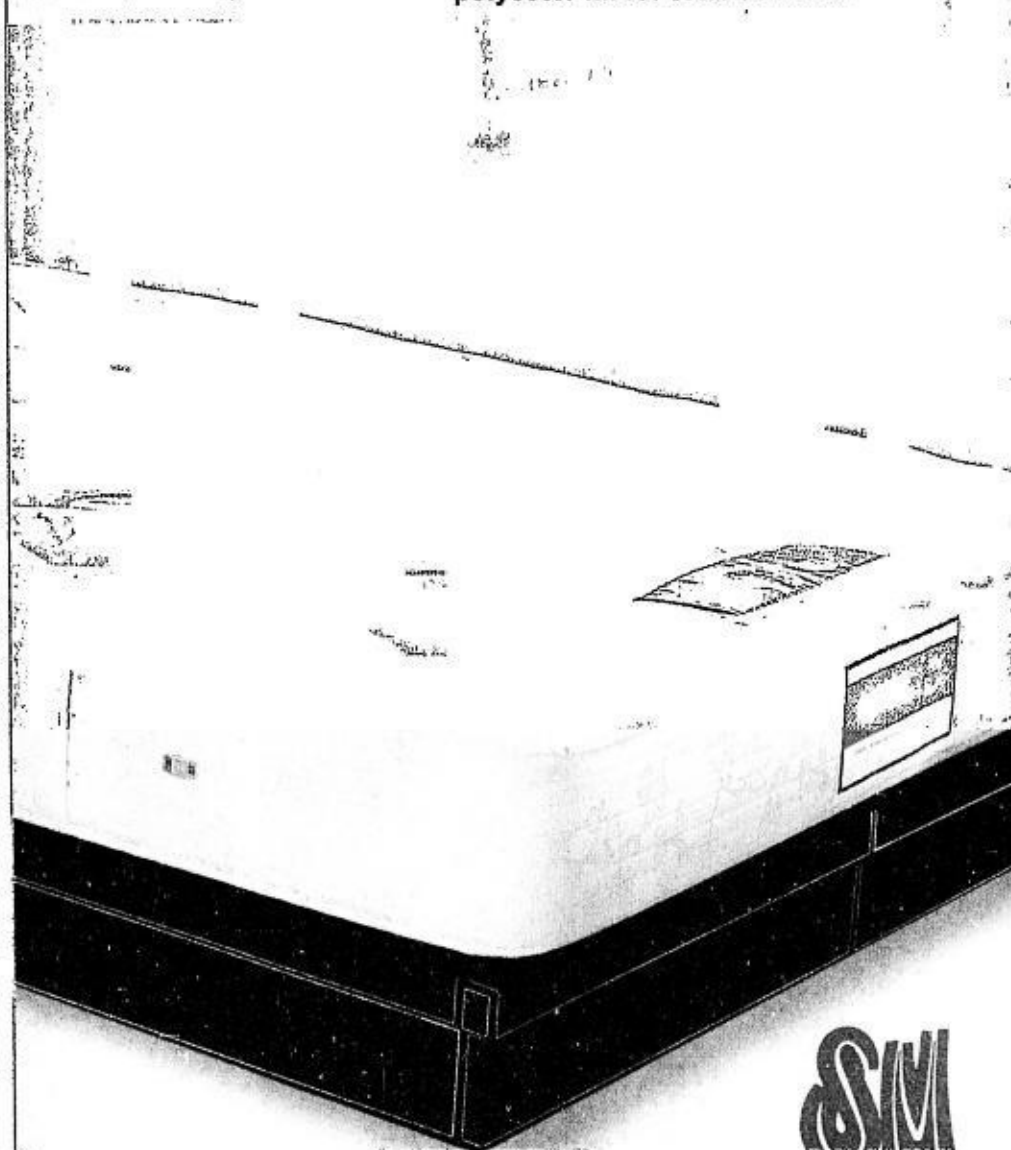


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OF 1/2 GIFTS
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polyester fill for total comfort.



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Win a gift that's
much better
than a partridge
in a pear tree

On the Eleventh day of
Christmas, my Moto gave to me
11 Bluetooth Headsets and a
new MOTOKRZR for free

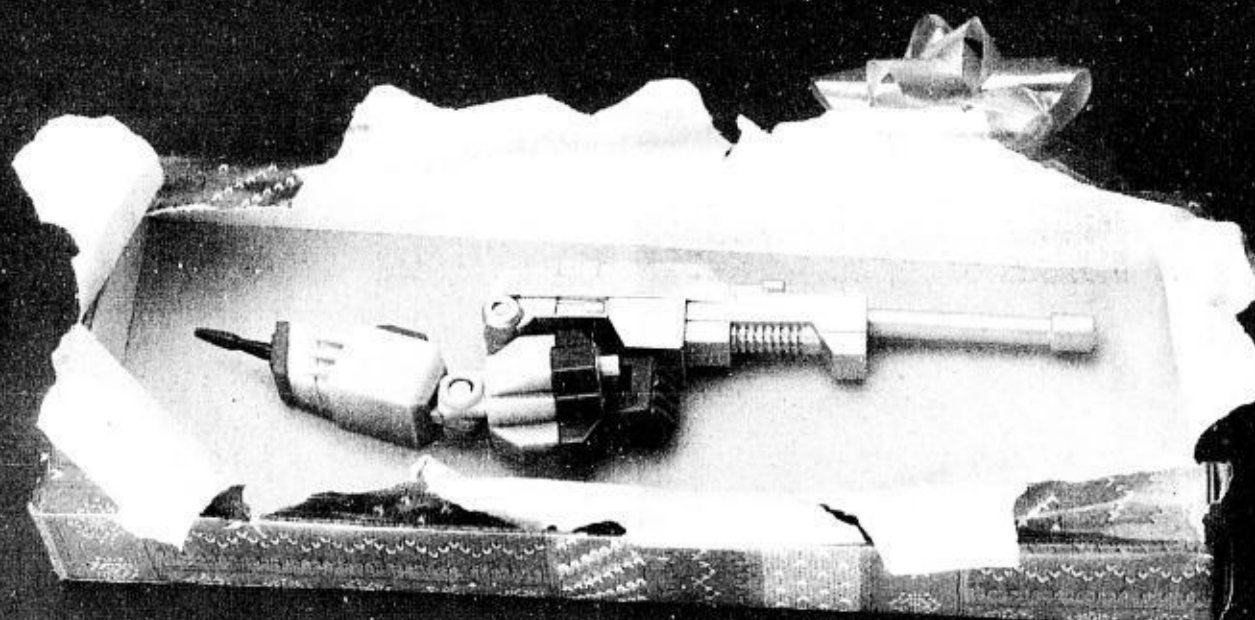
Tune in to your favorite radio station.
Listen closely to Motorola's Twelve Gifts
of Christmas and follow the DJ's
instructions after the song is played. If
you can sing the song then correctly
answer the DJ's question, you'll get to
win cool Motorola gifts and a chance to
win the new Motorola KRZR and RZR
phones! Better than Eleven pipers piping
and Ten lords a-leaping.

Make Motorola's 12 Gifts of Christmas
your ring tone and ring back. Just text in
the following keywords and send to 2955.

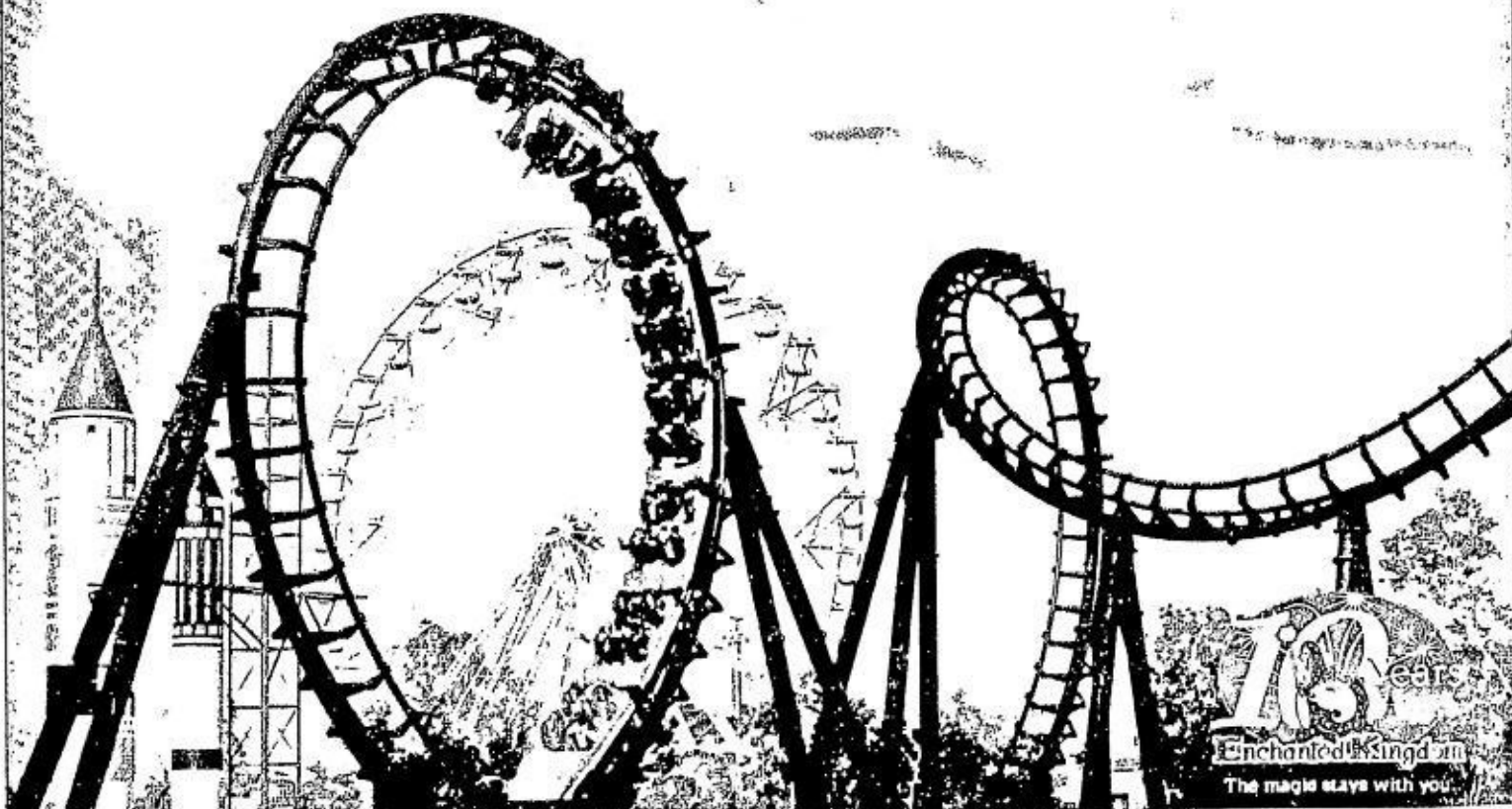
For Truetone text
HELLOMOTO TT 12GIFTS
For Monotone text
HELLOMOTO MT 12GIFTS
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HELLOMOTO PT 12GIFTS

For Ring back:
Globe: Text **MOTO12GIFTS** or **12GIFTS**
and send to 2332
Smart: Text **RING ADD 105670**
and send to 286

The P-750 robot



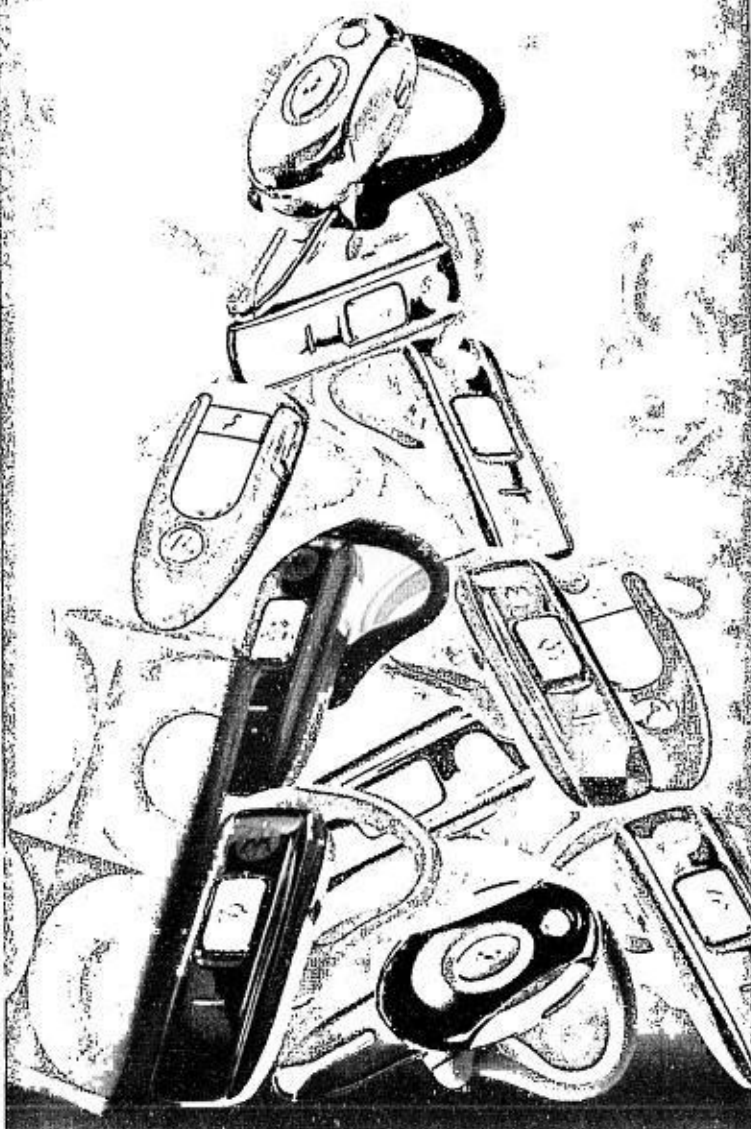
The P-750 EK Christmas Bundle



Your money goes a long way with Enchanted Kingdom's Christmas Bundle! For the
affordable price of P750, you get one (1) EK Day Pass, P100 Wizard Money and P200
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**MOTOROLA 12 GIFTS
OF CHRISTMAS!**

Ho, Ho, Hong Kong!

cover Hong Kong family adventure competition. Much as I would have loved to join the adventuring teams to test my own skills in getting lost and communicating via sign language, I was instead the faithful reporter-slash-scribe-slash Dakilang Kaladkarin chronicling the affair.

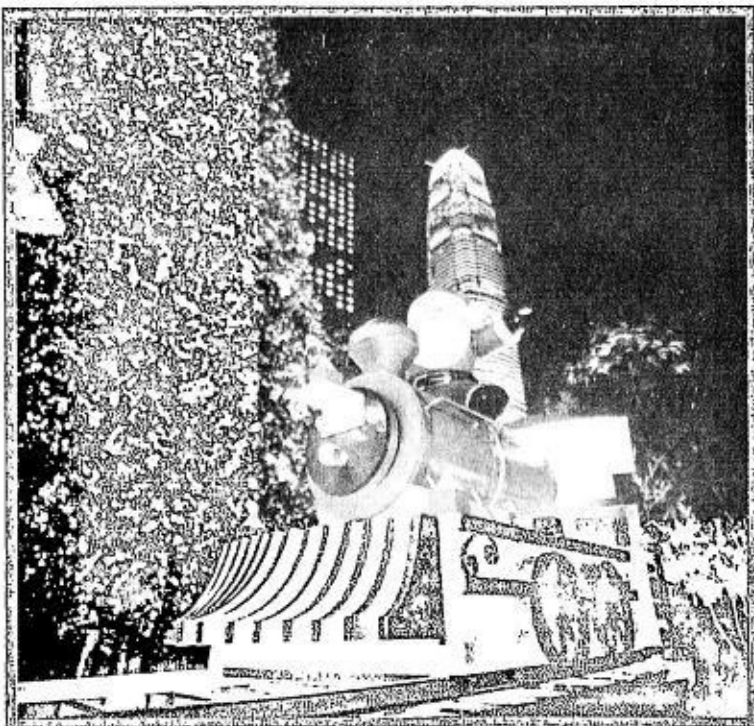
Dim sum and then some

But first, a little appetizer was in order before the flag was raised. This was the dim sum making contest held at the Super Star Seafood Restaurant at Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui. Master chefs first demonstrated how to make artful dim sum, and thus produced dumplings in the shape of stonefish, penguins, and sea horses. The challenge was for each family to come up with their own creative dim sum dishes.

As each of the different Asian families vied in to make their dim sum designs for show and tell, I couldn't help but notice that even in this simple, fun activity, the cultural identities and differences of the various Asian countries had manifested. The winning Thai family presented their exquisitely detailed dim sum in the form of various sea creatures, which the ultra-polite, soft-spoken mother described as "a representation of the sea's heritage." Then there was the nutty Pinoy family, who revealed their post-abstractivist dumplings in the form of a Harry Potter hat, a "monster with a smiley face" and a decapitated snowman. Ho, ho!

Orient yourself

The adventure began! The racers were given clues scattered at different points of Hong Kong.



The challenges highlighted the various attractions of Hong Kong (yes, Hong Kong isn't just about shopping you know!), such as the Avenue of Stars, The Wetlands, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, Victoria's Peak, and eventually ending at Santa's Town at Central.

Once again, the distinct cultural identities radiated. I admit I was rather impressed with the Singaporean family because, while the rest of the teams sped off into the cosmopolitan wilderness at the signal of the bullhorn, they instead decided to sit down, strategize and plan their route. No surprise that their united effort and forward thinking ways eventually won them first prize. Now if this little example proves anything at all,

it is really no wonder why Singapore is at the top of the South East Asian pack!

Then there was our daring Pinoy family who displayed such unconventional tactics as running about hyperactively, accosting every pedestrian walking down the city streets to ask for directions, cutting in line, and taking chances in wrong bus lines. In spite of losing the race, the happy-go-lucky Pinoy still found reasons to smile at the awards night, and even got the international audience to sing with them as they taught the song, "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands." Ho, ho, ho!

The Scenic Route

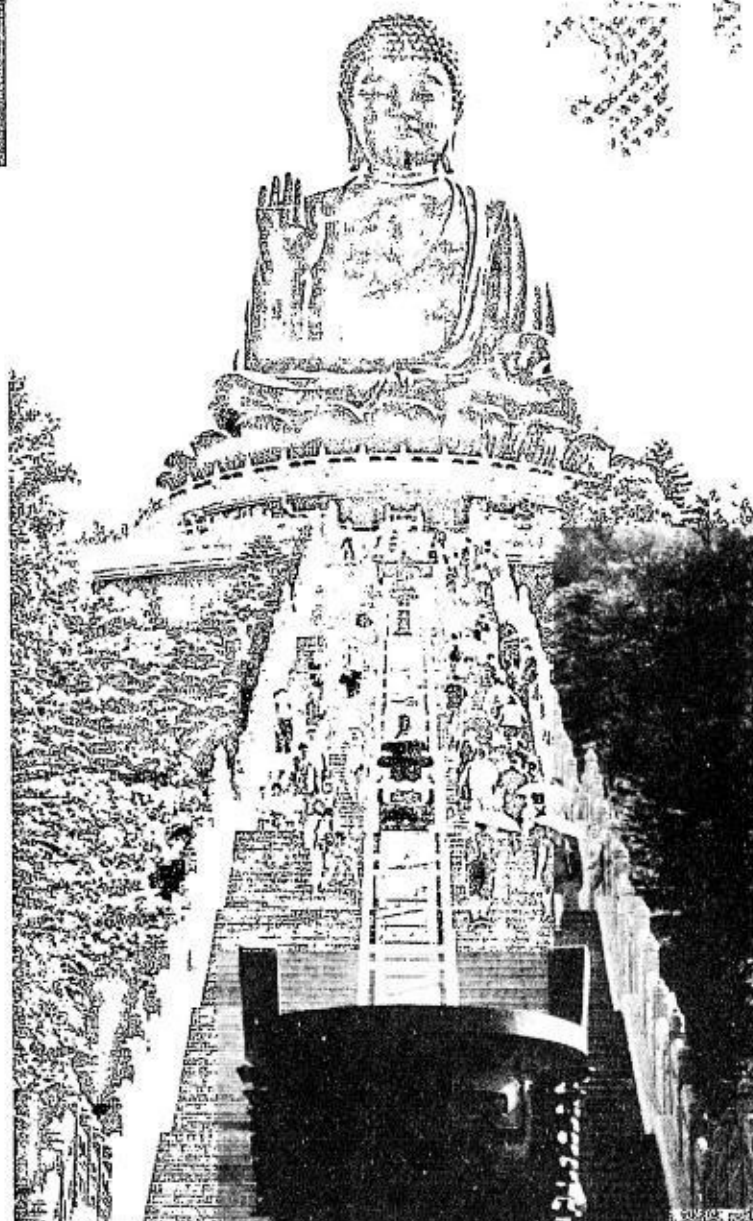
Taking a breather from the

competition, we took in the stunning sights of Hong Kong. One simply cannot miss the Symphony of Lights, a kaleidoscopic visual masterpiece by the Victoria Harbour, which currently holds the Guinness World record as the largest permanent light and sound show in the planet. Just imagine a whole skyline coming to life, as several buildings jointly perform a fully synchronized show of pulsating lights to music heard all over the harbor. Too cool!

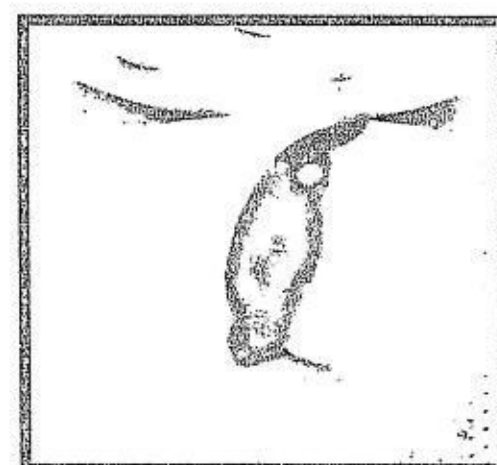
I'd tout the trip to LanTau island via the Nong Ping Skyrail as the highlight of the trip. Can't beat the awe-inspiring view of the South China Sea as you're up



FOLLOW the White Rabbit around Disneyland!



This magical wonderful city officially kickstarted my Christmas spirit!



HAPPY Feet dimsum!

5.7 kilometers, and then into the mountains into the Chinese village of Ngong Ping. Here, the world's tallest outdoor seated bronze Buddha statue serenely watches over all.

A personal highlight—I actually managed sneak out from the junket for a bit to view the masterpieces on display at the Hong Kong Museum of Art. Mind you, this art junkie never thought that I'd see original Matisse, Picasso, Magritte and Chagall paintings from the Centre Pompidou in Paris, in Hong Kong! One of my Christmas wishes came true after all.

Chinese winter wonderland

As a grand finale to the Discover Hong Kong Year, the city unveiled the Hong Kong Winter-Fest, which showcases the unique fusion of Eastern and Western Christmas traditions. Downtown Hong Kong was transformed into a winter wonderland, with the Central District becoming Santa's Town, a kids' holiday fantasy where Santa sits all day amidst his kingdom of

lights to listen to kids' wishes.

A curious-looking Wishing Tree right around Santa's post office caught my eye. A Wishing Tree is a traditional Chinese symbol for good luck, and this season, hundreds of little wish cards hung on the tree with the scribbles of hopeful children. Okay, so most of them were in Chinese characters (not scribbles), but I finally found one written in English, and it read, "Dear Santa. I want a horse." In any color." Aww. Looks like someone may not get his wish this Christmas! As I went through more wishing cards like the shameless snoop I am, one of Santa's Chinese elves came up to me and handed me my own wishing card.

In this magical, wonderful city that officially kickstarted my Christmas spirit, I wrote down my usual three wishes. World peace. Love and friendship. And a chocolate fountain. Who knows? This is wonderland after all!

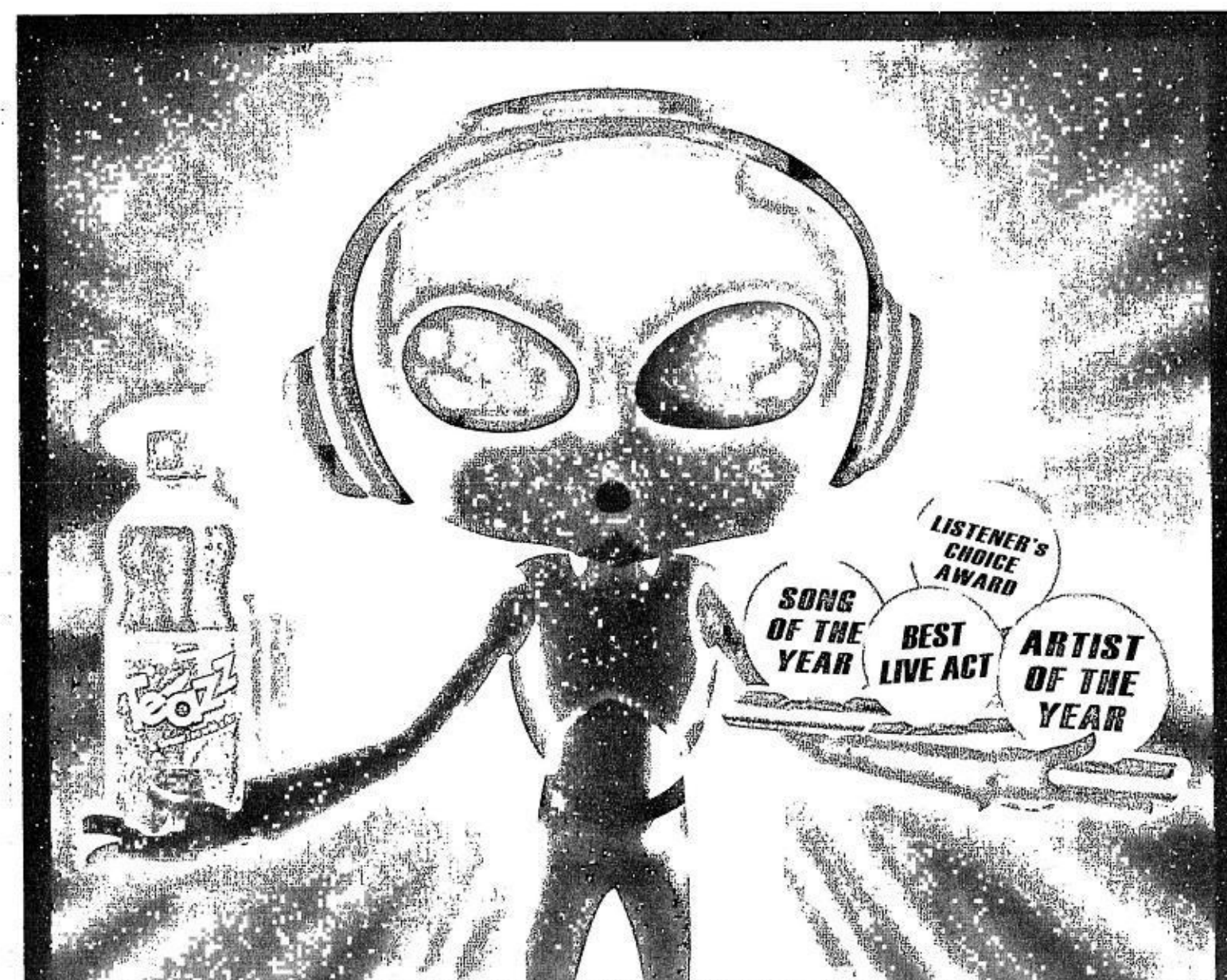
Happy golden days everyone—may faithful friends dear to you gather near to you once more! Peace!



HELP, WE'RE LOST! Pinoy Sy family ask locals for directions.



IF YOU'RE HAPPY AND YOU KNOW IT... the Sy family represents the 'Pinas'.



CONGRATULATIONS TO KAMIKAZEE
FOR WINNING FOUR MAJOR AWARDS AT THE 13th NU ROCK AWARDS.





Shirt happens!

By Gino de la Paz

IN LESS ACCOMPLISHED HANDS, a well-intentioned statement tee can easily go from refreshingly witty to just plain crappy. Luckily, the dudes behind Collision Theory, AJ Dimaricco and Caliph, know a thing or two (or a bajillion) about the ultimate go-with-everything garment we all love and rock.

"I've always wanted to do shirts for Philippine Icons, including Pacquiao, Efren 'Bata' Reyes, and the politicians," AJ says about Collision Theory's recent field trip to the universe of graphic tees. "Instead of just doing them straight up, I wanted to put a twist. Hence Gloria is Soul Gló and Erap is Erapenstein."

President Gloria with a Foxy Cleopatra

afro? Erap with a moppy, indie-friendly 'do? Believe it. These tees are as creative as they are current, crazy, and cut from a different cloth. "Soul Gló and Erapenstein were in the idea stage earlier this year. I just didn't have the time to actually turn them into shirts so I've released them now just in time for the Christmas season," he continues, laughing. "I'm still struggling to come up with an idea for FVR, Cory, and other icons, but I do have something for Imelda, which I'll probably release as girl shirts by early next year."

... And why politicians? Uhm, why the hell not? AJ calls this bunch of shirts the Los Politicos Series. "It'll be a twist on Philippine politicians in general—dictator or not. Other icons would then be part of a different se-

Collision Theory's Los Politicos T-shirts are creative, crazy, and definitely cut from a different cloth. Sexytime!

ries altogether. We'll probably not release as often as our friends at Team Manila and Analog Soul, but we'll surely come up with a whole range to choose from, maybe on a quarterly or seasonal basis, in 2007," he sexytimes.

Collision Theory shirts go for P350 each and are for sale at Pablo, Marikina Shoe Expo, Cubao. Store hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 4-9 p.m. E-mail: ajd@collision-theory.com or call 0917-8403938. Visit www.collision-theory.com.



IL DIVO Live

AMERICAN TENOR David Miller, Spanish baritone Carlos Marin, French vox populi Sebastien Izambard and Swiss tenor Urs Buhler are collectively known as Il Divo, and they're exactly that—divine. Their latest compact disc "Siempre"—sizzling with cuts like "Nights in White Satin," "Without You" and "Have You Ever Really Loved a Woman"—makes one hot gift. But you might as well double (quadruple?) the pleasure by adding tickets to the long-awaited "Il Divo Live in Manila" concert on Jan. 20, 8 p.m., at the Philippine International Convention Center Plenary Hall.

Call Concertus at 8172431 or 8132617 for tickets to the show. Or sign up for a Smart Infinity Plan 5000 and get a Nokia N73 and two VIP tickets to the concert. Citibank credit card holders get an exclusive 10 percent discount when they buy their tickets through TicketWorld.



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Win a gift that's
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than a partridge
in a pear tree.

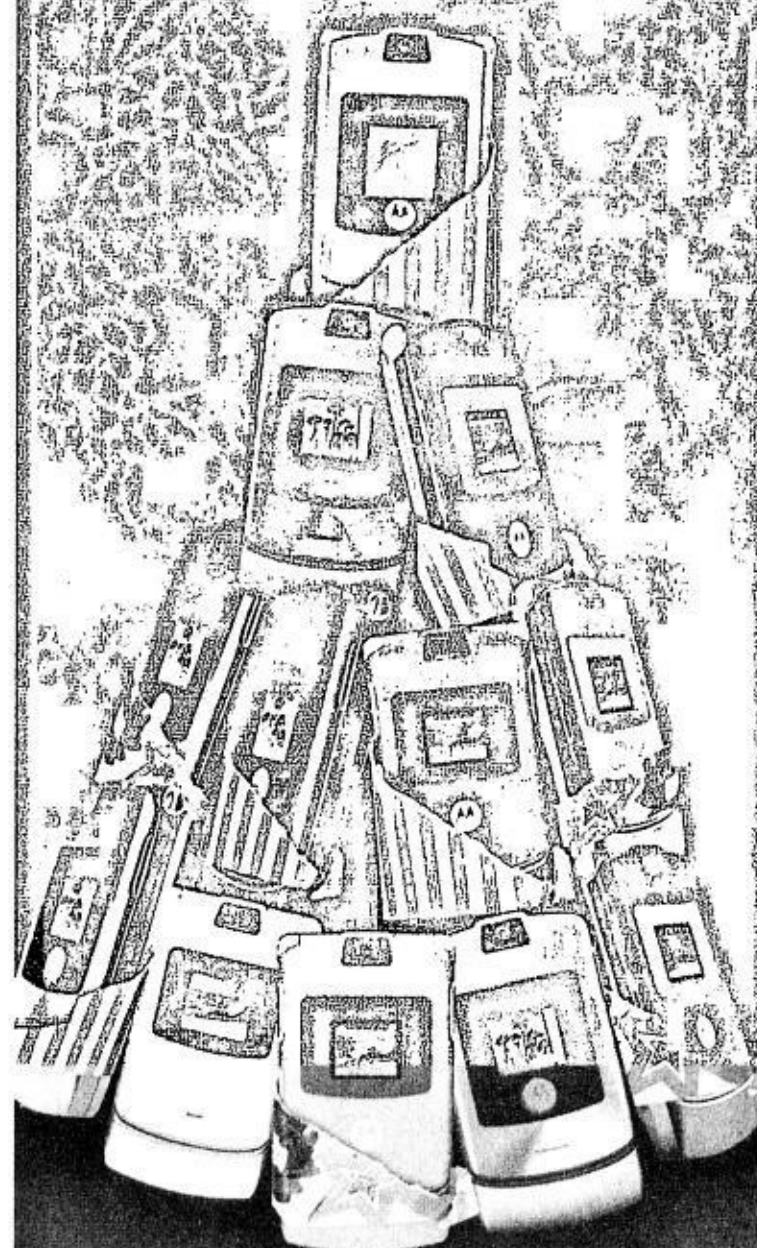
"On the Twelveth day of
Christmas, my Moto gave to me
12 Iconic RAZRs and a new
MOTOKRZR for free."

Tune in to your favorite radio station,
listen closely to Motorola's twelve Gifts
of Christmas and follow the DJ's
instructions after the song is played. If
you can sing the song then correctly
answer the DJ's question, you'll get to
win cool Motorola gifts and a chance to
win the new Motorola KRZR and RZR
phones! Better than twelve drummers,
drumming and eleven pipers piping.

Make Motorola's 12 Gifts of Christmas
your ring tone and ring back. Just text in
the following keywords and send to 2955.

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For Monotone text
HELLOMOTO12GIFTS
For Polytone text
HELLOMOTO12GIFTS

For Ring back
Globe Text: MOTO12GIFTS or 12GIFTS
and send to 2366
Smart Text: RING ADD 105670
and send to 286

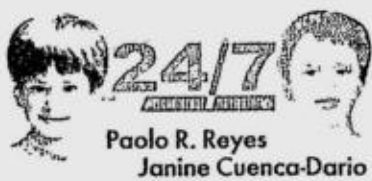


MOTOROLA 12 GIFTS
OF CHRISTMAS!

Caseli in Control

WITH CHRISTMAS JUST around the corner, the after-hours scene has been brimming with all sorts of merrymaking bashes. At the top of holiday heap is DJ Ferry Corsten's much awaited gig at the World Trade Center on Dec. 25, followed by the explosive "Big Blow Asian Tour" of Pacha Ibiza's popular resident DJ, Matt Caseli, on Dec. 28 at the Embassy Super Club and on New Year's Eve at Club Paraw, Boracay.

Best known for his sensual sets at the iconic Ibizan club, Caseli has been churning out the spine-tingling house tunes for the club's legendary space, The Funky Room (better known as "El Cielo" to Balearic Island denizens), since the



24/7
Paolo R. Reyes
Janine Cuenca-Dario

late '90s. The UK-born turntablist also headlines Pacha's biggest nights, including "Ministry Of Sound," "Subliminal Sessions," "Def Mix," and Roger Sanchez's "Release Yourself."

The Ibiza house authority will share the decks with DJs David Jacob (Kee Club HK), DJ Q (Kee Club HK), and NBK's own house hero, Manolet Dario. For tickets, call 892-0689 or visit www.mattcaseli.com. Door charge at P700, inclusive of two drinks.

Other Super! 24/7 events:

Dec. 23, Saturday

Mishka Adams & The Blue Echoes at Teatrino Greenhills; Severo, Rinka Collective, Salamin, and Tie Dye Shift at Saguijo; Bad-jao Roots at 70s Bistro; Cynthia Alexander at Conspiracy; Lounge-O-Rama w/ Soundsgood DJs at Embassy Cuisine; Weekender w/ DJs Paolo Maralit & Cao Ocampo at Jill's; House Nation at Capone's; DJ Kevin Ruiz at Mezzze; Rouge: Lounge in Color at M Café; DJ Jon Herrera at Temple; Bacardi Bling at Vida Malate; Sleepless w/ DJ Martin Pulgar at Embassy Club; Cam-pusition at Mag:net Café; Wham

Bam w/ DJ Bam at Government; DJs Scratchmark & Bliss at Prince of Jaipur

Dec. 25, Monday

Loud Electronic Ferocious feat. DJ Ferry Corsten: Live in Manila! at the World Trade Cen-

ter, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City; Chemical Underground at Absinth; I Don't Like Mondays! w/ DJ RO at Gweilos Makati; Jazz Trio at Captain's Bar; Folies de Mwah at Club Mwah!

Dec. 26, Tuesday

Cuisine Royale w/ DJ Manolet Dario at Embassy Cuisine; Sparkle w/ DJs Erwin Edralin & Patch at Absinth; Guarana at Café Havana Greenbelt; Piano Nights at Azzurro Linden Suites; Spirit of '67 at Captain's Bar

Dec. 27, Wednesday

Terno Inferno w/ Radioactive Sago Project, Drip, and Up Dharma Down at Saguijo; Lush: Smooth Rn'B at Fiamma; Noel Cabangon at Conspiracy; DJ Cao Ocampo at Embassy Cuisine; DJs Mars Miranda & Johnnyverse at Embassy Club; Skyy High at Vida Malate; Mishmash w/ DJ Brando Umali at Absinth; Acoustic Night at Azzurro Linden Suites; Wine Buffet at Mezzze; Stereo Therapy at Embassy VIP Room; Willy Wanka's Music Factory at Gweilos Makati; Ladies Night w/ DJ Kimozave at Prince of Jaipur; DJ Brit at Government; Jazz Night at Mag:net Café

Dec. 28, Thursday

DJ Matt Caseli: Live! at Embassy Club; Soapdish, The Purple Chickens, Triggerbliss, Stonefree, Southern Grass, and Hilera at Saguijo; Brownman Revival at 70s Bistro; Lynn Sherman at Conspiracy; Sonny Miñosa at SM Megamall Atrium A; DJ Boyet Almazan at Fiamma; Fluxx: Whatever Thursdays at Absinth; Worldwide Thursdays

w/ Soundsgood DJs at Nuvo; SPIT at Mag:net Café; Ladies Night w/ DJ Steve Mills at Temple; Open Mic Night at Azzurro Linden Suites; Thirsty Thirst-days at Bed

Dec. 29, Friday

DJ Benny Benassi: Live in Manila! at PICC Forum; Rock Ed w/ Sound, Chillitees, Bagetsafonik, Nityalila, El Mercurio, and Hardboiledeggz at Saguijo; Decadance w/ Boyet Almazan, Jill's; Yuletide Minstrels at Shangri-La Plaza Grand Atrium; House Sessions at Fiamma; Kiss MyHOUSE w/ DJ Elian at M Café; Joey Ayala at Conspiracy; Toy Symphony at Shangri-La Plaza Streetscape; Sunshine w/ DJ Mon Maramba at Absinth; Soul Food w/ DJ Roam at Fig & Olive; Acoustic Night at Azzurro Linden Suites; Flammable Fridays w/ DJ Mau Torres at Mezzze; DJ Owens Sun at Embassy Club; Soul Shine w/ DJ Marie Garcia at Embassy Cuisine; Jive w/ DJs Darrel & McDash at Temple; The Jerks at 70s Bistro; DJs Scratchmark & Jenna at Prince of Jaipur; Gogo Fridays at Bed

Schedules may change without prior notice. For more information and a complete listing of events, text 24/7 GIGS through your mobile phone and send to 2851 (Globe) and 2951 (Smart). Log on to mag24-7.com or pick up your free copy of 24/7 NOCTURNAL NAVIGATOR at bars and restaurants around the city. Submit your schedules before Tuesday to events@mag24-7.com & mag24_7@yahoo.com.



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- Overnight accommodation in a Deluxe Room
- Buffet breakfast for 2 persons daily
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- 15% discount for a 1-hour massage at Suriya Spa
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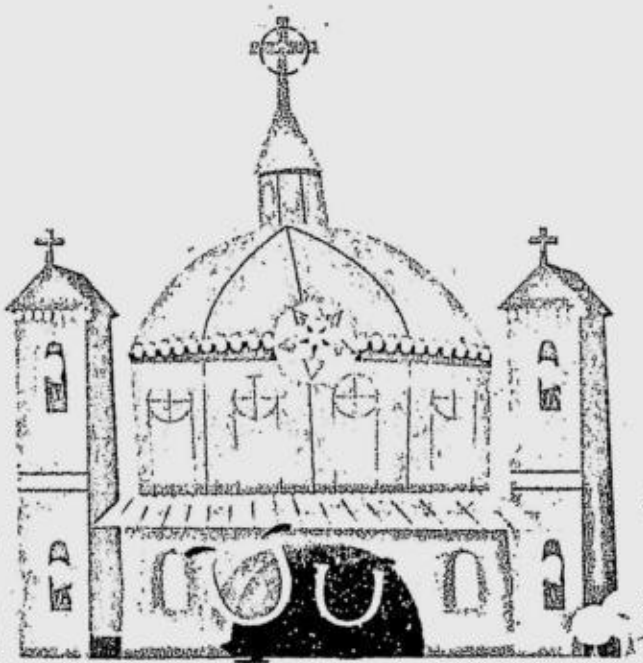
For bookings or more information call 633.7222

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CROWNE PLAZA
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For the religious...

Three weeks back, Super! published a photo of Rep. Imee Marcos at the Imelda Collection. We miscredited the designer of the modern version of the terno. It's actually a creation by Choc and Yvette Religioso. Our bad.



With more energy, mas happy mag-simbang gabi kaya mas happy ang Christmas.

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Mandarin Oriental brings holiday cheers and good tidings

MANDARIN ORIENTAL, MANILA FILLS UP ITS Christmas calendar with fun events, gastronomic treats, Christmas carols and special room rates for the season, to make holiday celebrations memorable.

Specially designed room packages for this season provide a merry respite for the whole family. Delightful Christmas accommodation packages start from P4,000++, inclusive of buffet breakfast for two and complimentary local calls. Holiday room packages are valid from until January 6, 2007, and are applicable only to local residents and expatriates with valid Alien Certificate of Residency.

Topping the delectable feasts prepared by Mandarin Oriental's executive chef Thomas Wenger and his culinary team are The Tivoli's exciting set menus that provide the ideal setting for joyous Christmas repasts consisting of four to five courses offered for lunch and dinner on Christmas and New Year's Eve, and on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. Splendid gourmet spreads by the trendy and chic Paseo Uno beckon on Christmas Eve and Christmas day, New Year's Eve and New Year's day. Tin Hau, the hotel's premier Chinese restaurant will serve two choices of sumptuous 10 to 11-course menus for minimum eight persons on Christmas Eve, and on New Year's Eve, while hearty buffets will be offered at lunch and dinner on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Scrumptious repast and merry activities await

revelers young and old alike, at the Captain's Bar. A gourmet dinner buffet on Christmas Eve is offered at P1,180+++, adult; P680+++, child, with time-honored Christmas hymns and carols sung by the 92 AD choir. On New Year's Eve, the gourmet buffet is at P1,480, adult; P780, child, with the JB Band performing in a countdown concert at 12 midnight to usher in year 2007.

The Mandarin Deli proffers the holiday season's sweetest trimmings with its Gingerbread House on display daily throughout the Christmas season at the hotel lobby, from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and at the upper ground floor of the Gateway Mall in Araneta Center, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Jolly old Saint Nick comes a-visiting at the Paseo Uno, The Tivoli, Tin Hau, Captain's Bar, Clipper Lounge and Mandarin Deli, on Dec. 24 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., and on Dec. 25 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. Bring the kids and a camera for a

rare photo opportunity of this magical moment with Santa Claus.

Holy Masses will be held at 10 p.m. at the ballroom on Christmas Eve, and at 11 a.m. at the lobby lounge on New Year's Day.

For celebrations at home with friends and family, yuletide-themed parties this festive season are also offered via the hotel's catering services and party packages, offering the perfect mix for

holiday gustatory fare. Yuletide party packages set menus start from P880 and buffet menus from P990. Delightful amenities include gift certificates for a weekend stay for two persons in a deluxe room with American breakfast and lunch or dinner for two at Tin Hau, among others, for a minimum booking of 200 persons.

For enquiries and reservations on Mandarin Oriental's various yuletide dining and event promotions and holiday packages, call 750-8888.

New Year countdown with the new minstrels at Dusit

WELCOME THE YEAR 2007 WITH AN ultimate party featuring the New Minstrels Band at the posh Grand Ballroom of Dusit Hotel Nikko on Dec. 31.

The New Year's Eve countdown is priced at P1,750 nett per person inclusive of dinner buffet with one round of iced tea or soda and party favors. Dinner starts at 7:30 p.m. Show starts at 9:30 p.m.

Dusit Hotel Nikko gives you more reasons to celebrate the New Year with its 'Year-End Pizzazz Room Package.'

Avail of the 'Year-End Pizzazz Room Package' and stay in one of the hotel's well-appointed rooms starting at P7,002 nett for a Deluxe Room, P8,502 nett for a Corner

Deluxe Room, and P9,302 nett for an Executive Suite. Room package includes accommodation for two persons (maximum of two

kids below 12 years old staying with parents), buffet breakfast for two person at The Café, hotel transfers (drop-off only) to Greenbelt or Rockwell, hotel transfers to or from Ayala Ave for the Makati City festivities and fireworks display (applicable only to booking on Dec. 31, 2006), and Gift Certificates worth P2,007 which can be availed in all F&B outlets of the hotel. This limited offer is valid only from Dec. 23, 2006 until Jan. 1, 2007.

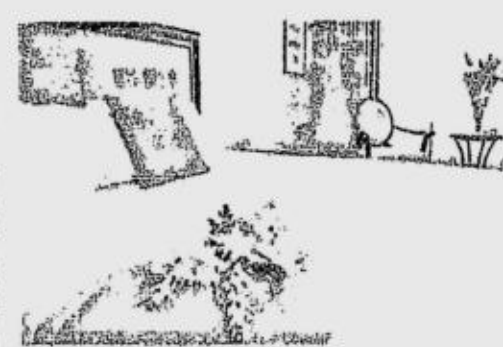
Be among Dusit Hotel Nikko's special guests and feel the spirit of the Holidays come alive as they make its presence felt through their gracious hospitality.

For more information, call 867-3333.

Holiday 1+1 room promo at The Bellevue Hotel

SPEND YOUR HOLIDAYS AT THE HAPPIEST hotel for families in southern Metro Manila area, The Bellevue Hotel, and get great deals on luxurious accommodations. Avail of The Bellevue's special holiday rate of P5,500++ per night and get the 2nd room or 2nd night for free. The promo includes deluxe room accommodation, buffet breakfast for free night or room, free use of swimming pool and gym facilities at The Bellevue Spa Club, 10 percent discount on dermatological services at any Belo Medical Clinic, complimentary shuttle service to nearby malls and business districts, welcome drink at 20/20 Entertainment Bar, welcome fruit plate, two bottles of mineral water replenished daily and local newspaper. Second room or 2nd night is not convertible to gift certificates and must be availed during the check-in period of the guest. For inquiries, call 771-8181. Promo period is from Dec. 15 to 31 and only available to local residents and balikbayans.

The Bellevue Hotel's Merry Christmas, Marginal Toast to more Christmases and joyful celebration at The Bellevue Hotel's 20/20 Entertainment Bar. This Dec. 1 to 31, drink to the successes and triumphs of the past year



with the hotel's Merry Christmas, Margarita promo. Get one pitcher of margarita for only P430++, or enjoy your pitcher of margarita with chicken wings or nachos for only P700++ while listening to 20/20's live bands!

Mistletoe, The Bellevue's Drink of the Month for December. Experience "Decem-brri!" with The Bellevue's Drink for the merry month of Christmas. Mistletoe is a sinful concoction of oreo cookies, strawberry and vanilla ice cream, topped with luscious whipped cream and cherries. Each drink entitles you to a free Santa-garbed Pugsley stuffed toy. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

Hail to the King of Sisig

ONE OF CONGO GRILLE'S specialties - the ultimate pulutan among Pinoys, sisig - proved to be a hit among the Kapampangans' discriminating palate as the restaurant recently won first place, taking home all honors in the professional categories of the sisig cooking competition of the successfully concluded Sisig Festival held at the SM City Clark in Pampanga. Along with Congo Grille's grand slam win was the distinction of being declared "Sisig King" by no less than the province of Pampanga, the Sisig Capital of the Philippines. Pampanga's Sisig Festival was launched in 2003 as part of the city government's effort in making Angeles City a wholesome tourist destination and the country's culinary capital. This year's event attracted 57 contenders who competed in the professional and amateur levels to come up with 177 different recipes of Pampanga's



famous sisig. Congo Grille's executive chef Reynaldo Natividad bested master chefs from different restaurants from cities all over to emerge as overall winner in the professional level.

Chef Rey has been with Congo Grille for two years now, and has been responsible for bringing out the rich, savory, and truly Filipino taste of Congo Grille's bestselling dishes. Among the restaurant's top sellers are its inihaw na pusit, bangus ala pobre, crispy tadyang, crispy pata, chicken fingers, tuna belly, lechon kawali, and Bacolod chicken.

Congo Grille recently opened its 10th branch at the SM City San Fernando to bring its kind of delectable Filipino fare to more customers in Pampanga.

Yuletide cheers at the Malayan Plaza

SPEND A JOYFUL HOLIDAY SEASON WITH friends and loved ones at The Malayan Plaza. For a minimum of two (2) nights per stay, get the 3rd night free for only P 9,600. Accommodations are for a One Bedroom De Luxe Suite. Package is inclusive of buffet breakfast for two (2) persons, welcome wine and chips, bottled water, local newspaper and free use of the hotel's facilities. Experience modern lifestyle living at The Malayan Plaza, located at ADB Avenue cor. Opal Road, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. For inquiries and reservations, please call (632) 706-0055 or visit our website at www.quantumsuites.com.

December room discount at City Garden Hotel

THIS MERRY MONTH OF DECEMBER, CITY Garden Hotel is giving you a special room price. Starting at P1,450 per person on twin-sharing basis. One may enjoy the comfort and convenience that City Garden is offering; what's more this special price also includes breakfast at the Le Jardin Restaurant, complimentary newspaper, free use of swimming pool and use of the fully-equipped gym. For shopping, you may opt to explore nearby Powerplant Mall at Rockwell or Glorietta Mall for some shopping. After a day of fun activities, try the Bamboo Bliss, a signature Spa package at the newly opened Bamboo Massage & Spa at the Upper Penthouse, or a facial treatment for two for a relaxing and rejuvenating retreat. The Bamboo Bliss starts with an aromatherapy whirlpool bath followed by a full body scrub and finished with a highly relaxing massage. For dinner, do not miss the Rooftop Bar & Grill. Offering sumptuous grilled specialties and appetizers, it has the best view of the metropolis at night. A great way to end a great day! For more details, City Garden Hotel Makati is located in Makati's restaurant strip at 7870 Makati Avenue corner Kalayaan Avenue, Makati City. For reservations or inquiries, please call (02) 899-1111, or its domestic toll free number 1-800-101-GARDEN (427336), or at www.citygardenhotels.com.

Coherent new effort from Taking Back Sunday

By Noelani Torre

A FEW MINUTES INTO "Louder Now," alterna-rock band Taking Back Sunday's newest album, you'll realize how apt the title is.

Compared to their two previous releases, the quintet's third effort is heavier, chunkier, and definitely louder. Sometimes, it's even thunderous.

Pattern

Aside from the amped-up sound, however, the album is virtually indistinguishable from 2002's "Tell All Your Friends" and 2004's "Where You Want To Be." The same stream-of-consciousness lyrics are here, the same quiet-loud-quiet-loud song pattern, and the same abstract, angst-ridden sentiments.

Of course, there's nothing wrong with a band sounding like itself, nor is it required to go through reinvention. To be fair, TBS could hardly sound any better than they do in their latest album.

With Eric Valentine at the helm, this record has the slick surfaces and strategically unpolished edges of a well-produced record, indeed.

But, after the first four tracks are over, and the fifth is unfolding in much the same way, it can get pretty tiring (though the third track, "MakeDamnSure," isn't bad). Your brain shuts down, and the rest of the album already sounds like background noise.

More decent numbers

It'll take another spin before you'll even notice that there are a couple more decent numbers in the disc's last half, like "Twenty-Twenty Surgery," "Spin" and "Miami."

"Twenty-Twenty Surgery" has a radio-



TAKING BACK SUNDAY. Heavier, chunkier and louder.

friendly melody and a catchy refrain mixed in with the heavy guitars and drums. "Spin" is a barrage of pure energy, with the voices hardly distinguishable from the driving strings. "Miami" is softer, more melodic, and pop-punk.

Composed of vocalist Adam Lazzara, guitarist/vocalist Fred Mascherino, guitarist Eddie Reyes, bassist Matt Rubano, and drummer Mark O'Connell, Taking Back Sunday is a relatively new band.

Formed in 1999, their double-guitar and melodic harmonizing distinguished them

from other similar bands that emerged shortly after they did.

These days, however, that's not quite enough anymore. There are too many bands going down the screamo route, and if TBS sounded different five years ago, they're now in danger of sounding too much like everybody else. But, they ought to seriously consider moving in a new direction.

As a whole, "Louder Now" sounds cohesive and competently executed. It's just too homogeneous to be anything more than mildly interesting.



PIMENTEL. Recognized for her music.

Outstanding Zambaleños feted in Manila Hotel rites

MRS. LOURDES "BING" Pimentel, producer-composer of popular stage musicals like "Pag-ibig sa Bayan" and "Nasaan si Hesus?," along with the Bolipata brothers, artist Anita Magsaysay-Ho and fashion designer Ben Farales, were recently honored by the UZJ Grand Centennial Celebration as its Outstanding Zambaleños in the field of arts and culture.

Sen. Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel's wife said she was only too happy to share her gift of music and song to Filipinos who, now more than ever, need inspiration and entertainment in this time of crisis.

Powerful tune

The powerful tune, "Pag-ibig sa Bayan," culled from Mrs. Pimentel's stage musical about martial law (restaged

recently at Meralco Theater), was performed by the world-renowned Madrigal Singers at the awarding ceremony held at the Manila Hotel last Dec. 16.

Awardees from other sectors included Pacita Gonzalez (business and industry); Mona Valisno and Ma. Trinitas Canlas (education); Ofelia Huang and Msgr. Chris Cacho (socio-civic/religious); Ernesto Arce, Josefina Lichauco and Erlinda Basilio (professional), and former President Ramon Magsaysay (posthumous). Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr., Sen. Luisa Ejercito-Estrada, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, Sen. Richard Gordon, Rep. Milagros Magsaysay, Rep. Antonio Diaz, Gov. Vic Magsaysay and Sec. Hermogenes Ebdane (government and public service).

Films about dysfunctional families...

From page E4

choreographed for her.

Freaky fun

Aside from their zonked-out and flaky characteristics, the film also generates a lot of freaky fun from the bizarre situations that the members of the family find themselves in—including escaping from a hospital with a corpse in tow!

But, all of these "crazy" elements end up making a lot of sense, because they force the members of the family to finally heal, come together—and, what do you know?, even love each other!

Catch "Little Miss Sunshine" today and tomorrow at Ayala Cinemas.

From page E1

Curran's "Painted Veil."

Our top five choices for the year: Martin Scorsese's "The Departed," the Hollywood remake of the acclaimed Hong Kong hit, "Infernal Affairs," about police intrigue and deception, is the filmmaker's best work in years (and features Oscar-worthy performances from Leonardo DiCaprio and Jack Nicholson).

Ensemble drama

After the searing "21 Grams" and "Amores Perros," Alejandro Inarritu returns with his gripping ensemble drama, "Babel," about a tragedy that soon involves six families (with noteworthy performances from Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett).

Paul Greengrass' alternately inspiring and

heartbreaking "United 93" reenacts of the events that happened inside United 93, the fourth aircraft hijacked by terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001.

Eastwood's "Flags of Our Fathers" tells the cautionary story behind the famous photograph.

A fresh journalism graduate learns lessons about life, love and career when she's hired to be a ruthless fashion magazine editor's assistant in David Frankel's "The Devil Wears Prada." The divine Meryl Streep demonstrates her superior thespian skill and comedic timing—and, in the process, steals the movie from its main star, Anne Hathaway.

Animated feature

Rounding out our Top 10 are Jonathan

Dayton and Valerie Paris' "Little Miss Sunshine"; George Miller's animated feature, "Happy Feet"; Pedro Almodovar's "Volver"; Jacques Audiard's "The Beat That My Heart Skipped," and Larry Charles' "Borat!"

Also in our notable-films list are: Bryan Singer's "Superman Returns"; Ken Loach's "The Wind That Shakes the Barley"; Edward Zwick's "Blood Diamond"; Nicholas Hytner's "The History Boys"; Stephen Frears' "The Queen"; Alfonso Cuarón's "Children of Men"; Emilio Estevez's "Bob-by"; Todd Field's "Little Children"; Sofia Coppola's "Marie Antoinette"; Allen Coulter's "Hollywoodland," the animated films, Gil Kenan's "Monster House," John Lasseter and John Ranft's "Cars," and John Cameron Mitchell's controversial and sexually graphic "Shortbus."

WISHKO TO MERRY CHRISTMAS

MEET & GREET SANTA CLAUS
Talk to St. Nicholas and have your photos taken.
(SM Fairview, Dec. 23, 24 & 25
SM San Lazaro, Dec. 24 & 25
& SM Southmall, Dec. 23, 24 & 25)

A MERRY MAKING CHRISTMAS
Watch festive shows,
join arts & crafts and fun games.
Listen to the Sights & Sounds of Christmas
by the SM Storyland Carolers.

A CARNIVAL CHRISTMAS CLUBBIE PARTY
A fun-filled afternoon for the entire family.
See acrobats, contortionist, roving stilt walkers and an exciting animal show.
Get a chance to win prizes and surprises.
(December 23 - Saturday at SM Iloilo)

CHRISTMAS FUN-TASY COMES ALIVE AT SM STORYLAND

SM Storyland is throwing a month-long Christmas celebration for the young and the young at heart!

Meet & Greet Santa Claus - You better watch out, Santa Claus is coming to Storyland! Get your picture taken with the jolly old Santa Claus at SM Fairview (Dec. 23, 24, and 25), SM San Lazaro (Dec. 24, and 25), and at SM Southmall (Dec. 23, 24, and 25)!

Carnival Christmas Clubbie Party - We're pulling out all the stops for Storyland Clubbies only - with acrobats, contortionists, roving stilt walkers, and an exciting animal show! Guests can get a chance to win prizes and many other surprises! The Party kicks off on Dec. 23, Saturday at SM Iloilo!

Come on down and celebrate the Season at SM Storyland! You'll be welcomed by our playful and lovable mascots and hosts - Lionel the King Lion, Sgt. March the Toy Soldier, Willie the Circus Elephant, and the wise Eggbert - and you'll experience a Christmas fun-tasy like nothing you've ever imagined! See you there!

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Films about dysfunctional families have a healing function

By Nestor U. Torre

FILMMAKERS DOTE ON STORIES about dysfunctional families because their idiosyncratic personalities and convoluted interrelationships make for colorful and even combustible movie fare.

"Nice" characters are predictable, even all-black villains harbor few surprises, but dysfunctional protagonists are textured and endlessly fascinating because they're somewhere tantalizingly in between.

Into the light

You can't really tell how each of them will turn out, so you remain interested and involved as the characters stumble, bumble and mumble

their way into the light.

Movies that demonstrate this unique hold on viewers include: "Home for the Holidays," a comedy directed by Jodie Foster about a woman (Holly Hunter) who flies home to spend Thanksgiving with her wildly dysfunctional family.

The "Godfather" film series, with all its fighting, feuding, betraying and killing relatives—sibling and clan rivalry in full, lethal froth!

Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie," with its fantasizing mother, her morose son, and his club-footed sister.

"The Lion in Winter," the fierce and personal drama of Henry II (Peter O'Toole) deliberating over a successor while inveighing against everybody in



BRESLIN. Plays only "normal" member of the family in "Little Miss Sunshine."

his family tree, including his equally tempestuous wife, Elenor of Aquitaine (Katharine Hepburn), who gives as well as she takes.

Plus: "The Munsters," "Long Day's Journey Into Night," "Suddenly Last Summer," "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" "Rocket Gibraltar," "The Sea Gull," "Seven Brides for Seven Brothers," "Passion Fish"—etc.!

Unique

These and other similar movies come to mind, because we've just seen one of the best movies about dysfunctional families ever made—"Little Miss Sunshine." Each and every member of the family in the film is unique—and far-out.

Granddad (Alan Arkin) is a drug ad-

dict and teaches his little granddaughter to do a "sexy" dance for the talent portion of a kiddie beauty pageant!

His son (Greg Kinnear) is a motivational speaker—who's a failure in his own life. His wife (Toni Collette) is at her wits' end trying to cope with her loved ones' bizarre actions and weird temperaments.

His son (Paul Dano) has stopped speaking for the past nine months, and hates his family with a vengeance. His uncle (Steve Carell) has just tried to kill himself. His kid sister (Abigail Breslin) is the only "normal" family member, but she's peculiar in her own way, because she has agreed to perform the "kooch" dance number that her grandfather has

FILMS/ E3

THE WEEK NEVER ENDS sa

KAPAMILYA, MALIGAYANG PASKO!
Masasaya at magagandang palabas ang regalo namn sa Inyo
Lunes hanggang Linggo!

SABADO

Wowowee 12:30 nn
Kumukutikutitap ang noontime show ng bayan dahil makikisaya ang showbiz bigatin na sina **JUDY ANN SANTOS, SARAH GERONIMO, Black Eyed Peas' APL.D.AP** at **CESAR MONTANO**.

Nagmamahal Kapamilya 3:00 pm
Tampok ang mga endearing na reunion stories pina **KATHLEEN, AGNES, LOIDA** at **PAZ**.

Let's Go! 4:00 pm
Go drama ba ang *Go Kada?* Kawawa naman si Zap, magpa-Pasko sa dorm, habang sina *Kristoff* at *Juniper* nagkakatampuhan.

Star Magic Presents Abi Ur Luv 5:00 pm
Si *Celine* (**DENISE LAUREL**) nagseselos kay *Neri* (**SHAINA MAGDAYAO**). Sino ba sa kanila ang mas matimbang sa puso ni *Gen* (**RAYVER CRUZ**)?

TV PATROL SABADO 6:00 pm
Maraming balita ang dito mo lang mababalitaan.

Komiks Presents Da Adventures of Pedro Penduko
Isang kaluluwang walang katahimikan, paano tatalunin ng Pinoy adventurer ng bayan?

John En Shirley
Si **AIAI DELAS ALAS** mai-in love kay *John*?

XXX Eksklusibong Explosibong Exposé 8:30 pm
Pandaraya sa palengke ng *Blumentritt*, mabubuking nal **Pamaskong Handog ni Idol Para sa Bayan**

MANNY PACQUIAO di lang sa ring bida, dahil sa kantahan winner din siya. Ang Christmas concert ni *Idol* para sa 'yo.

Aalog-Alog
Aalugin ka ng Christmas musical extravaganza ng makulit na barkada!
Guest Stars: **TONI GONZAGA, JED MADELA, KIRAY**.

Sports Unlimited
Lets take a look back at an adventure-packed year!

LINGGO

12nn **ASAP '06**
Were you nice this year? You better be because **ASAP '06** has their goodies ready for you.
Your Song: Ang Soundtrack Ng Love Life Mo
Presents **God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen**
Starring: **PIOLO PASCUAL** and **CLAUDINE BARRETTO**
Sakit na dulot ng nakaraan, mapalitan kaya ng pag-ibig?

Love Spell presents **Pasko na, Santa Ko**
Starring: **AIAI DELAS ALAS, VHONG NAVARRO** with the **Pinoy Big Brother Teens**.
Magtutulungan ang lahat para makalaya si *Crisanta*. Maniwala na kaya siya sa magic ng Pasko?

4:00 pm **THE BUZZ**
Mga holiday intriga masasagot nal

6:00 pm **TV PATROL LINGGO**
GOIN' BULILIT
Kung kasama mo ang gang na makulit, gising na gising ka sa simbang gabi.

7:45 pm **RATED K: HANDA NA BA KAYO?**
Tuloy pa rin ang Pasko kasama si **Ms. KORINA SANCHEZ**.

SHARON
Sa Christmas, kasama ni *Mega* sina **MAKISIG MORALES, JOHN LLOYD CRUZ, BEA ALONZO, ANNE CURTIS** at **SAM MILBY**.

Sunday's Best presents:
The Santa Clause 2
Starring: **TIM ALLEN**

PRINCESS HOURS

6pm **Pangako Sa 'Yo**
Maaagaw ba ni *Bea Bianca* si *Angelo* kay *Yna*?

TV Patrol World
Ang kabalitaan ng mas maraming Pilipino, sa buong bansa at sa buong mundo.

Kapamilya, Deal or No Deal
Sa araw ng Pasko, may mag-uuiw na ba ng P2 million?

Superinggo
Ngayong araw ng Kapaskuhan, peace na ba muna sa bayan ng mga superheroes?

Maging Sino Ka Man
Ang landas nina *Eli* (**JOHN LLOYD CRUZ**) at *Jackie* (**BEA ALONZO**), muling magtatagpo. Matatandaan ba ni Jackie si Eli?

Princess Hours
Si *Janelle*, ordinaryong dalaga, nang dahil sa isang fixed marriage magiging prinsesa. Paano kung ayaw ng prince niya sa kanya?

Tuwig Biyernes **Maging Sino Ka Man**
Hosted by: **CHARO SANTOS-CONCIO**
The **VILMA SANTOS MMK** special.

WEEKDAY HIGHLIGHTS

Ang ka-kasiyahan sa umaga ng mas maraming Pilipino. Ito ang **BIGTIME TRIO!**

Homeboy 10:40 am
Pilipinas, Game K N B?
Wowowee
Kapamilya Cinema

Monday	Puso ng Pasko
Tuesday	Prinsipe Abante at Ang Ibong Adarna
Wednesday	Dahil May Isang Ikaw
Thursday	Pitong Gamol
Friday	Okey Ka Fairy Ko The Movie

Inocenti De Ti
Si *Florencia*, pagtatangkaan na agawan ng mana.
Novel, Ikaw Ba 'To? Tuwing Lunes
Hosted by: **GABE MERCADO**
Willing ka ba magsakripisyo ngayong Pasko?

Ang ka-kasiyahan sa umaga ng mas maraming Pilipino. Ito ang BIGTIME TRIO!

Homeboy 10:40 am
Pilipinas, Game K N B?
Wowowee
Kapamilya Cinema

SATURDAY Special

Stars recall their most memorable CHRISTMAS MOMENTS

By Rito P. Asilo

CHRISTMAS IS THE PERFECT TIME FOR spiritual reflection—and for strengthening family ties. We tracked down some of show biz's busiest and most accomplished celebrities and asked them to talk about their most memorable Christmas moments. (Special thanks to Juno Henares and ABS-CBN Talent Center's Rica Dylim for their assistance.)

Charming and unassuming

We have worked with Angel Aquino in a staging of New Voice's popular play, "The Vagina Monologues," and acted with her in Rica Arevalo's Cinemalaya feature film, "ICU Bed #7." We couldn't believe that a woman as beautiful as she could also be as charming and unassuming. ("Donsol" director, Adolf Alix, shared with us that this angel of a woman didn't mind riding a passenger bus to get to the cash-strapped Sorsogon shoot!)

It's not hard to relate to Angel's heartwarming recollections of celebrating Christmas with her family.

She recalls: "When my siblings and I were young, my nanay would always make it a point to have a small Christmas tree decorated with very few lights. On Christmas Eve, we'd all have new clothes and small gifts to open by midnight. While we heard mass, she would prepare our simple *noche buena*, so everything would be ready by midnight."

Meager means

"As a child, Christmas Eve was always the most beautiful and most exciting night of the year for me—my mother managed to do that despite very meager means. I didn't know any other way to celebrate it! Now, I make sure that my own children would look forward to Christmas the same way I did."

It has been 31 years since the country's most enduring heartthrob, Christopher de Leon, created a stir in local Tinseltown with his award-winning and star-making film debut in Lino Brocka's "Tinimbang Ka Ngunit Kulang." But, the iconic



AQUINO. Heartwarming recollection of celebrating the holidays.

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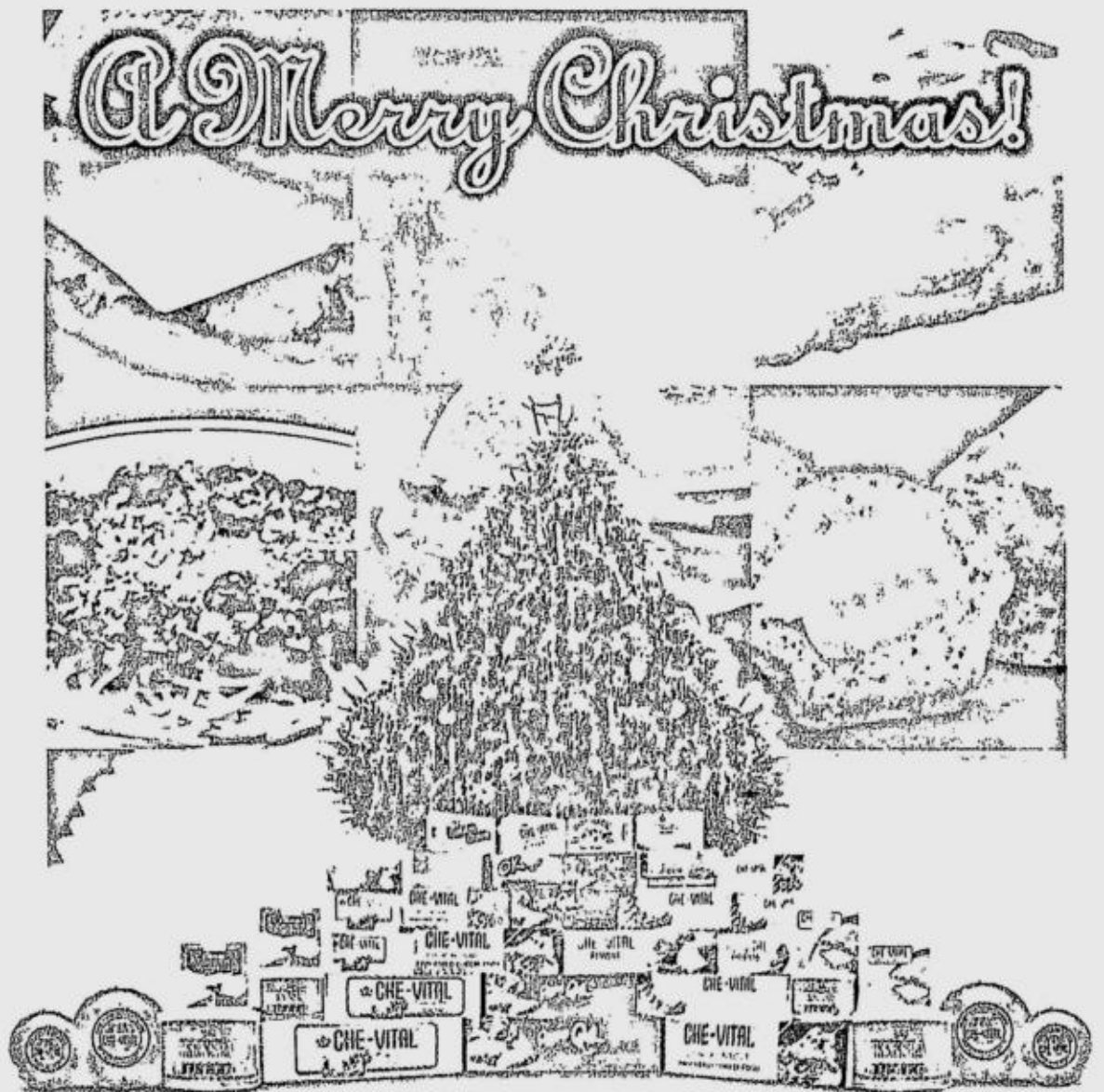
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SMART TAYO

Spiritual haven

I STAYED OVERNIGHT AT THE DORMITORY of the Monastery in Malaybalay, Bukidnon, with my daughter, Amanda, upon the invitation of Dr. Vivian Gonzales (a dear friend from my hometown, Los Baños, Laguna) to attend the wedding of her daughter, Ava.

The Monastery opened in 1885 when Benedictine monks from Spain visited Mindanao for missionary work. But, the Revolution and the Philippine-American War that followed prompted them to abort their mission.

Another foundation was later initiated by the Abbey of our Lady of Monserrat. On Aug. 6, 1981, Abbot Africa accepted the land donated by the most Rev. Francisco Claver, S.J., Bishop of Malaybalay in San Jose.

Autonomous

The Benedictine Abbey soon after approved the establishment of the foundation. Two years later, the Monastery of the Transfiguration was inaugurated and became autonomous in 1986.

Dom Martin, a noted fashion designer in Manila before he entered the monastery, recalled: "It was the only building visible from the highway, but now, with all the trees (that the monks planted), it looks like a forest."

Monks devote themselves to a vow

STREET SMART

Mandy Navasero

of silence and a life of continued prayer. They farm and do spiritual reading. The facility is a spiritual center perfect for retreats. The monks have been farming rice, corn, peanuts, soya beans and coffee. They produce 100 percent pure coffee under the brand name Monks' Blend.

The coffee farm is a six-hectare spread. Monks' Blend uses German technology and meets world-class standards. Coffee processing has provided for the Monastery's upkeep, scholarships for its farmers' children, medical aid for the poor, and livelihood projects for women.

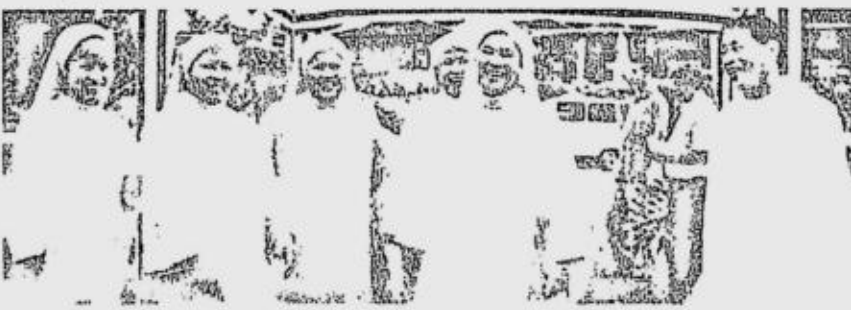
The Monastery of the Transfiguration is living proof of how monks have made a difference in the lives of the province's poor folks.

Feast

At its mountain church, you'll hear monks singing in Latin during vesper prayer. I felt the presence of Christ and heard angels whisper. The experience is a feast for the spirit that you'd want to last forever.

Get in touch with the Monastery of the Transfiguration, San Jose, Malaybalay City, Bukidnon, P.O. Box 11. Call (088) 221-2373, or e-mail laorden@mozcom.com.ph.

The Mandy Navasero Batanes Photo Safari is scheduled from April 5-8. We will be accepting participants until Jan. 15. E-mail mandy.navasero@yahoo.com.ph, or call 899-1767 or 896-3208.



DOM Martin (right) with Benedictine sisters based in Bukidnon.

Stars recall their most . . .

From page F1



DE LEON. Richer, more meaningful life.

actor continues to lord it over other younger male comers.

This year alone, he delivered a splashy performance in one of the most eclectic roles (in the motion picture, "Nasaan si Francis?") of his decorated career.

Reunion

Next up is his reunion with National Artist for Film Eddie Romero, who directed him in "Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?" and "Aguila."

Happily, superstardom hasn't spoiled Boyet. In fact, it has made him even more appreciative of

God's blessings. He shares: "When I was younger, Christmas was always about gift-giving. Now, I'm happiest when I spend it with my family. I have discovered the real meaning of the holidays: 'I love Christmas because of the season that it brings, the songs we sing, the gifts we give, and the smiles we receive—all these in celebration of Jesus Christ's birth. This realization has made my life richer and more meaningful!'"

While being thankful for a lucrative career here, heartthrob



MILBY. Alone on Christmas.

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RICA PERALEJO ANGELICA PANGANIBAN

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PER DTI-NCR PERMIT NO. 4620. SERIES OF 2006

FORUM

'What's the best local movie of the year?'



"INANG YAYA." Reflection of the predicament of poor Filipino mothers.

By Noelani Torre

PEOPLE SAY IT HASN'T BEEN A VERY GOOD year for the Philippine film industry, but they've been saying that every year for a longtime now. So far, the industry is still holding on.

Despite the predominance of Hollywood movies, people still do watch local films. We asked some viewers which among the local films they saw this year was the best, and here are their answers:

"Kubrador." It was the only local movie that I watched where I didn't feel like walking out in the middle of the screening. I've always liked Gina Pareño as an actress. Every time I see her, *maayos ang performance niya*.

Realistic

"Realistic ang movie—pinapakita kung ano

talaga ang buhay ng mahirap. Lahat halos ng pinapalabas na film ngayon, fantasy. Pinapakita lamang nito kung gaano na kalala ang buhay-mahirap sa ating bansa. Maganda ang ending, *hindi pinilit na gawing happy. Totoo talaga*."—**Monette Mateo, 21, student**

"Close to You." It appeals to the Filipino culture—people loved that movie because they could relate to the situation it presented. It portrays the Filipino's passion in getting what we want, no matter the cost. But, they soon realize that the only thing they desire is just beside them."—**Jojo Hilomen, 26, team leader**

"For me, it's Ron Bryant's 'Rotonda.' It has an '80s feel that voices out that present-day Filipinos haven't really progressed that far, which is why the film revolved around several people. Mark Gil's character is "*lipas na*." The people he meets and observes as a journalist

are the same people he's written about during his peak.

"Unlike some of this year's popular and award-winning films, 'Rotonda' does not bank on exoticizing or orientaling. Its strength is in exhibiting the *Pinoy* experience in the raw—dirty, polluted, loud and stunted."—**Paolo Herras, 25, indie filmmaker**

"Para sa akin, ang best na napanood ko ay ang 'Sukob.' Nakakatakot kasi. Nag-enjoy talaga ang pamilya namin. Sulit ang binayad sa sine. Ang mahal na kasi ng sine ngayon, kaya usually, ang pinapanood namin, hindi local, kasi maraming beses nang nangyari na nasayangan lang kami sa binayad namin."—**Lynn Soriano, 43, housewife**

Different

"Kaleldo." It's different from everything else. Strong production values and great performances. Non-mainstream storytelling. It's a joy to watch."—**Benjamin Padero, 26, production designer**

"Ang Pamana: The Inheritance." It's a horror story that depicts genuine Filipino values and culture. I liked it because, while it was produced by an independent filmmaker, the effects and story were cohesive. The cinematography was great. The actors were perfect in their respective roles. The movie has a great twist and a spine-tingling plot."—**Oscar Antonio Yalong, 28, team leader**

"Inang Yaya" ang gusto ko. True-to-life story. Very touching. Feel *yun ng bawat ina*."—**Edna Agkis, 50, teacher**

"Kubrador." Lahat na lang ng Tagalog movies, kung 'di horror-fantasy, e love story. At hindi siya predictable. Ang paggawa nila ng scenario, hindi fictionalized o idealized. Kung anong itura ng community, *yun ang talagang pinakita*."—**Rendon Javier, 30, musician**

"Manay Po." It's funny, entertaining and realistic—nakaka-relate ang gay people."—**Hasmine de la Peña, 16, student**

"Sukob." Watching the movie is like reading a novel—you just can't stop flipping the pages so that you can finally reach the end."—**Cheryl Ann Berja, 21, customer service representative**

"Moments of Love." Iba ang concept. 'Di ordinary love story ang dating. At maganda ang kwento."—**Judelyn Cordova, 24, teacher**

"Tulad ng Dati." Maybe I'm biased because I love The Dawn! But, it's a very good movie, and I wasn't the only one who enjoyed it. It's half-biographical, half-fiction.

Musical numbers

"I liked the concept of amnesia and how its makers linked it to the idea of letting go of the past—but for the main character, the past hasn't happened! It also had great musical numbers."—**Robert Aquino, 30, NGO worker**

"Wag Kang Liligon" is one of the most horrifying movies I've seen. It's one of the reasons why the film industry is still alive. Inside the movie theater, I honestly wasn't watching anymore—I was just peeking. Literally!"—**Trina Coral, 21, customer service representative**

"Inang Yaya" is a reflection of the situation of poor Filipino mothers who leave their children by choice, thinking that doing so might give them a better life. We can't deny that, in reality, an 'inang yaya' really exists. Poverty influences mothers to take care of other people's children."—**Christine May Estorque, 18, student**

"Moments of Love." Maganda ang pelikula, nakaka-in-love. Nung napanood ko siya, gusto ko ring ma-in-love ulit."—**Yolly Artificio, 29, teacher**

"You Are the One," with Sam Milby and Toni Gonzaga! Mababaw, pero nakakatuwa rin kasi makulit silang dalawa. Ang daming 'di malilimutang eksena."—**Annah Bayeyeng, 24, clerk**

Stars . . . From page F3

Sam Milby admits that this year is the loneliest Christmas of his life. He explains, "This year, I won't be able to spend it with my family in the States because of my commitments here. But, I remember spending my happiest Christmas with them: We were all surprised when my half-brother came over dressed up as Santa Claus. It was memorable—and he was very funny!"

Movie debut

For Christian Bautista, who makes his movie debut in the MMFF entry, "Mano Po 5," a Christmas concert he still remembers with fondness signaled the realization of a dream—his. He explains: "At age seven, I sang solo in a big holiday concert for the first time—I was so nervous!"

But, the audience already knew then what many of his fans know now: The young charmer had talent and stage presence, so the impressed crowd rewarded him with—a standing ovation!



BAUTISTA
Realization of a dream.

Ingredients:
24 slices loaf bread
1/2 cup melted butter
2 tsp. butter or oil
1/2 cup onions
2 tsp. minced garlic

1/2 kilo diced chicken
1/4 cup flour
1/2 cube chicken cube
1/3 cup diced celery
1/3 cup diced red bell pepper

1/3 cup diced green bell pepper
1/4 cup green peas
1 cup ALASKA EVAP
1/2 cup chicken stock
1/4 cup grated quickmelt cheese

Procedure:
Roll out bread slices using a rolling pin or a bottle. Brush with melted butter and fit into muffin tin or puto molds. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes in an oven at 350°F until slightly toasted. Set aside.
To make the filling, sauté onions and garlic in butter. Toss in chicken and stir fry until almost done. Toss in flour and cook for a few minutes. Add in chicken cube and vegetables and cook for a few minutes. Pour in ALASKA EVAP and stock and bring to a boil. Lessen heat and add in cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve inside baked bread cups.

Ingredients:
2 1/2 cups diced bread
1 cup ALASKA EVAP
1/2 kilo ground pork
1/2 cup chopped onions
2 tsp. minced garlic
1/2 cup chopped carrots

1/4 cup chopped celery
1/3 cup chopped green bell pepper
1/3 cup chopped red bell pepper
1/2 cup grated cheese
3 tsp. flour
1 1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. liquid seasoning
a dash of pepper
3 hard-boiled eggs, halved or quartered
2 pcs. jumbo hotdogs

Procedure:
In a bowl, mix bread and ALASKA EVAP with a fork. Blend in remaining ingredients except for hard-boiled eggs and hotdogs.
Divide into 3 and place in a sheet of foil. Place hotdog and egg slices on top and roll like a log and seal ends by twisting the foil. You can also make these into a meatloaf by pressing half of the meat mixture in a foil-lined loaf pan or leche flan mold.
Place hotdogs and eggs on top and press remaining mixture over it and flatten top. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 350°F or steam for 45 minutes or until top is firm. Cool slightly before serving.

Ingredients:
2 tsp. butter or oil
1/2 cup chopped bacon
2 tsp. minced garlic
1/3 cup minced onions
1/4 tsp. oregano
300 gms. diced sweet ham

100 gms. diced Vienna sausage
3 tsp. flour
1 1/4 cup chicken stock
1 1/2 cup ALASKA EVAP
1/4 cup grated cheese
1 cup broccoli florettes

1/4 cup diced red capsicum
salt & pepper
400 gms. pasta of choice, cooked per package directions
2/3 cup grated quickmelt cheese

Procedure:
Sauté bacon in butter. Add in garlic, onions and oregano and cook for a few minutes.
Stir in ham and sausage and cook for a few minutes. Toss in flour and cook over medium heat. Remove from fire and stir in stock, little by little, while stirring continuously until well blended. Return to fire and bring to a boil. Stir in ALASKA EVAP and vegetables and simmer for 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Pour over pasta and top with cheese. Bake for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and slightly golden.

Ingredients:
1 cup sugar (for the caramel)
3 cans ALASKA EVAP
3/4 cup sugar
9 egg yolks

3 eggs
1/2 tsp. dayap zest or vanilla extract (optional)

Procedure:
To make the caramel, cook sugar in a pan over low heat. Melt sugar without stirring, until golden in color. Pour into 3 leche flan pans or desired mold and let it cool until completely set.
Simmer water in a steamer until ready to use. To make the custard, stir all remaining ingredients lightly in a bowl until well blended. Using a cheesecloth or fine sieve, strain custard mixture and fill 3/4 of the prepared pan. Cover with foil and steam in barely simmering water for 30 minutes or until top is firm to the touch. Make sure the water doesn't boil to achieve a very smooth custard. Let cool and chill before serving.
Makes 3 medium-sized leche flans.

The Christmas
Evaporated milk, Canned Applesauce, Canned Pineapple

ALASKA
Evaporated Milk
Canned Applesauce
Canned Pineapple

IN THIS ISSUE
CELEBS share holiday spirit with their families.

/G3

SATURDAY Special

DiCaprio, Hudson fly high

By Nestor U. Torre

AS THE ENTERTAINMENT year comes to a close, some stars are shining more luminously than others, as major comers in entertainment.

Thanks to the Golden Globes, which have just released their list of 2006 nominees for awards, the "new and improved" Leonardo DiCaprio has established him-

self as the actor to beat this season.

Feat

DiCaprio has been nominated twice as best actor, for his performances in "The Departed" and "Blood Diamond." The "twofer" feat is made more noteworthy by the fact that the former child actor and teen fave has impressed critics and jurors alike with his new, more mature, and tougher screen persona.

It wasn't an easy transformation to effect, since DiCaprio is a sensitive soul who as a performer prefers subtlety, nuance and psychological insight to the powerful, overwhelming approach that action-adventure-drama stars favor.

The "new" Leo's initial test was "The Departed," where he unveiled his tougher persona to stunning effect. Even more tellingly, he was able to tough it up—and out—without losing his sensitive heart and soul.

That's a dodgy combination to pull off, so the actor should be credited—and rewarded—for meeting his greatest career challenge to date.

DiCaprio was always looked up to as an outstanding thespian, but he wasn't all that popular. After "The Departed" did well at the box office, he's become both acclaimed and bankable.

And, it's expected that "Blood Diamond" will second the motion in that regard, since it's also copped a best actor nomination for DiCaprio.

Sky's the limit

So, it looks like the sky's the limit for Leo in 2007.

Other multiple nominees at the Golden Globes are director Clint Eastwood and actress Helen Mirren, so things are decidedly looking up for them, as well.

But, DiCaprio's current luminosity is best matched by a new talent, Jennifer Hudson, who's also flying high after her nomination for best supporting actress for her exceptional singing and acting in the new musical,



DICAPRIO. Both acclaimed and bankable.

CARICATURE BY STEPH BRAVO

DICAPRIO/G3

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Give Love On Christmas Day	Jackson 5	KA470
Santa Claus Is Coming To Town	Jackson 5	KA464
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G2

SATURDAYSpecial

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2006

So in love

JUDY ANN SANTOS AND RYAN Agoncillo grace the cover of the December issue of Mr. & Ms. magazine. The issue also includes a free calendar with delicious recipes from the country's culinary centers. Plus, articles on gifts from the heart, a Christmas of hope, waiting for Santa, poinsettias and other Yuletide blooms, the spirit of sharing, festive Philippine fashions, circuit car racing, peace offering for the holidays, celebrities' weight loss, sensual marriage, etc!

'Triple Treats Prize Overload'
In Sun Cellular's newest TV commercial, "Triple Treats Prize Overload," Jay-R, Iya Villania and Drew Arellano have a fun time endorsing three products—Jay-R promotes Sun's 27/7 Call and Text Unlimited, Iya pitches for 24/7 Text Unlimited service, while Drew plugs the Sun Messenger.

The biggest barkada blowout and raffle this season invites you to listen to hours of the coolest sounds with iPod Nanos, take photos or make home movies with Canon Powershot digital cameras and Mini camcorder, surf the net and play online games with 13M Think-Center PCs, and watch blockbuster movies through Phillips DVD Players, Samsung LCD 32" TV sets or 40" Home Theater Systems.

Even better, Sun's grand raffle will be awarding three Mazdas LS sedans, and P3 million will be given away to the winning Triple Treats group. Subscribers may register at 395-8333 or 333 toll-free. Visit www.suncellular.com.ph. Promo ends on Jan. 28.



SCOTT Wolfe and Amanda Detmer are friends who find love in the most unexpected places in "Picking Up and Dropping Off."

Hallmark's Christmas movie marathon
The marathon of Christmas movies on the Hallmark Channel continues on Dec. 25 at 6 p.m. with "Angel of Pennsylvania," which depicts three children's heroic journey to save their father after he's arrested for a crime he didn't commit.

Dec. 25 at 8 a.m. and 2 p.m., "The Christmas Box" dramatizes timeless truths about love, family and sharing.

Dec. 25 at 4 p.m., "Picking Up and Dropping Off" finds love in the most unexpected places. Dec. 25 at 6 p.m. and 12 a.m., "Off Season" is about a boy who believes that the guest occupying the hotel room next to his is no one else but Santa Clause on vacation!

And on Dec. 25 at 10 p.m., "Fallen Angel" dramatizes a son's homecoming that opens the doors to a troubled past.

Christmas sale
Mano Mano Fair Trade Store (2594 Lamayan St., Sta. Ana, Manila; tel. 632-5644) sells its beautiful handicrafts at up to 30 percent off regular prices until Jan. 6. The store showcases the best of Philippine arts and crafts from all over the country, and its products are prized both here and abroad.

'Nick Takes Over Your School'
This year, Nickelodeon has "invaded" campuses, bringing in a fun-filled, slime-sloshed day, bursting with prizes and surprises. "Nick Takes Over Your School," a nationwide campaign to promote fun, sportsmanship, team activities and fitness among students features "Nick-citing" activities and hilar-

Movies on TV
On HBO, today at 9 p.m., "The Corpse Bride." Dec. 24 at 9 p.m., "The Polar Express." Dec. 25 at 7 p.m., "Shrek 2," Dec. 26 at 7 p.m., "Hitch." Dec. 27 at 9:30 p.m., "Love Walked In." Dec. 28 at 9 p.m., "Lean on Me." Dec. 29 at 1:30 p.m., "HBO, What's New in 2007?" 7 p.m., "Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events."

On Cinemax, today at 5 p.m., "Arlington Road." Dec. 24 at 1:50 p.m., "Dog Park." Dec. 25 at 3:30 p.m., "The Stars Fell on Henrietta." Dec. 26 at 3:25 p.m., "The Eddy Duchin Story." Dec. 27 at 6:30 a.m., "War and Peace." Dec. 28 at 2:55 p.m., "Rio Bravo." Dec. 29 at 6 a.m., "It's A Wonderful Life."

Essence of Christmas

From page G2

happiness." —G. Duran

"The purpose of Jesus' coming is to open the eyes of living beings who are trying to make some sense out of this dry, material world.

"Everybody experiences loneliness. I used to think I was completely happy every Christmas, but I later realized that, like time, the joy that I felt went as fast as it came. Emptiness came knocking at my door and made me realize I lacked real love.

Satisfaction
"I am a soul temporarily encased in a material body. Now, the only thing that gives me satisfaction is spiritual food. During Christmas and throughout the year, let us remember that Christ wants us to be happy. The only way to do that is to love the Supreme Lord unconditionally. This is the essence of Christmas." —A. Torres

"Christmas is not about the gifts we give or receive, nor is it about the tasty food and the Christmas tree. It's not about Kris Kringle or Santa Claus. It's a time to meditate about Jesus and His Father." —C. Lebarido

Teachings
"Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus' birth and remember His teachings. Christmas is not about enjoying ourselves. It's about Jesus Christ. On his birthday, let us try to please him and make him truly happy." —J. Moorcroft

"Christmas is a time to be thankful to God for allowing us to get to know Him better. It's a day of loving. On this day, let's focus on Christ's teachings." —K. Lebarido

"Jesus is the perfect example of someone who's completely in love with the Supreme Father and all living beings. We can meditate on His love. Let's pray for a taste of His supreme love." —B. Silva

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Per DTI-NCR Permit No. 4944, Series of 2006

SATURDAY *Special*

SNEAK PREVIEW

Three-in-one MMFF entries hit and miss

By Rito P. Asilo

"Matakot Ka Sa Karma"

D: Jose Javier Reyes
S: Gretchen Barretto, Rica Peralejo, Angelica Panganiban

JOSE JAVIER REYES' THREE-IN-one, reap-what-you-sow parable has a provocative concept that needs a more cohesive script.

In the first episode, "Kama," the comebacking Gretchen Bar-

retto plays Aleli, a mother who raises her son, Jake, alone while her husband, Steve, works in Australia.

When mother and son transfer to an old mansion, strange

things begin to happen—especially after she "grudgingly" agrees to purchase an old bed for a song from the effusive antiques dealer, Mrs. Tirona (Liza

THREE-IN-ONE/H2



BARRETTO, PERALEJO AND PANGANIBAN. Strong-willed damsels in distress.

Joys to behold.

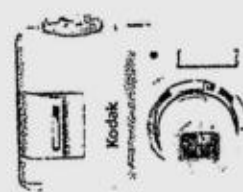
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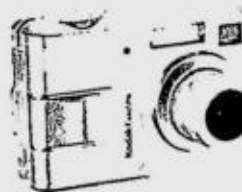
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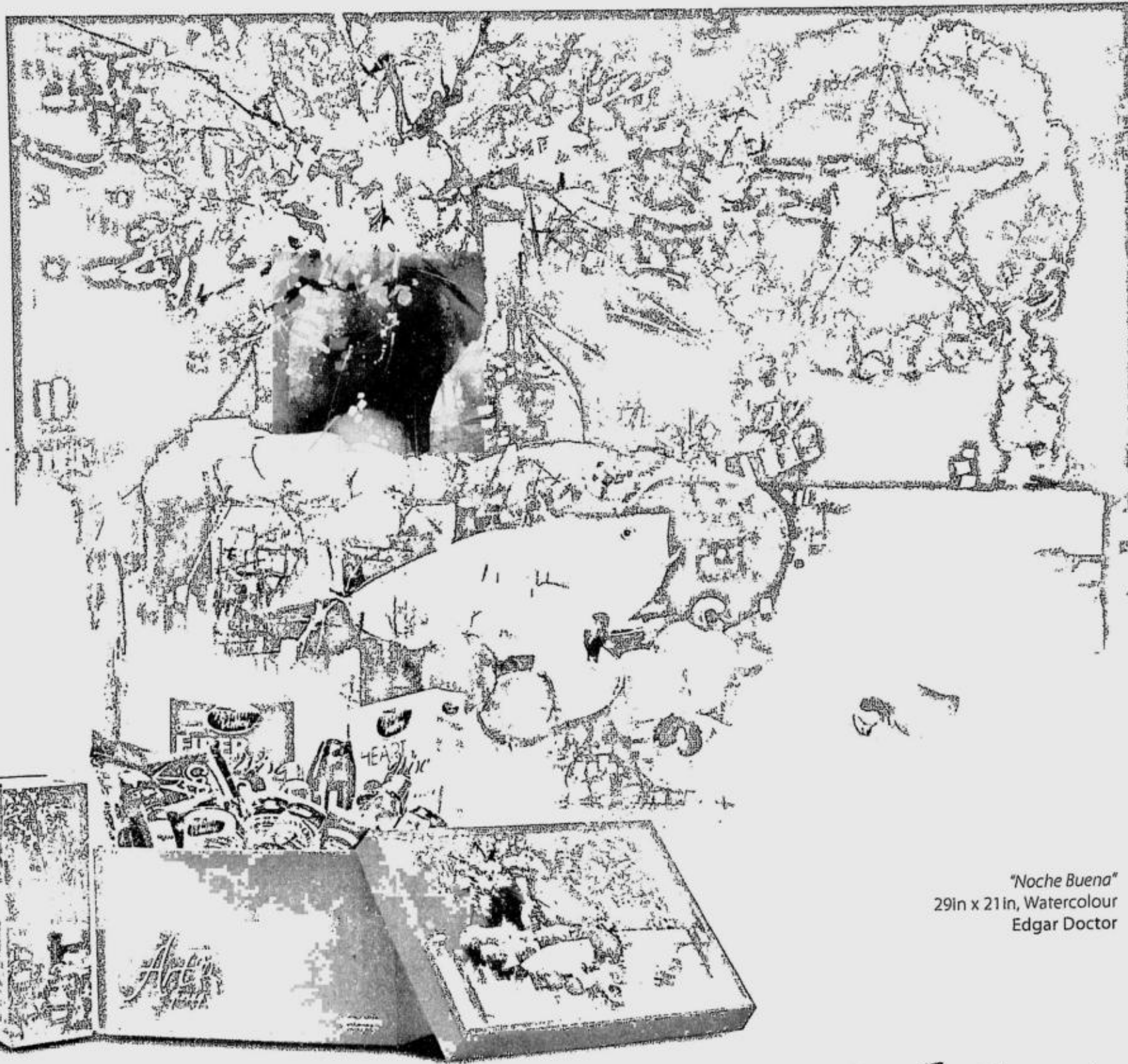
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Three-in-one MMFF entries hit...

From page H1

Lorena): Soon after, Jake begins talking to an "imaginary" lady (Tanya Garcia), who happens to be the ghost of woman who, during childbirth, died on the bed Aleli just purchased—and she's convincing the boy to go with her!

The second episode, "Aparador," is about child abuse: Mariel (Rica Peralejo), the bored housewife of rich businessman, Jaime (Derek Ramsay), is "urged" to buy an old closet because of the huge discount Mrs. Tirona is offering.

Then, things begin to go bump in the night, as a moaning and groaning, emaciated young man starts to haunt them.

The cycle of doom continues in "Tokador," in which headstrong and independent-minded Katrina (Angelica Panganiban) receives a housewarming present—a pre-war dresser that contains a mysterious locket inside its drawer—from boyfriend, Victor (Rafael Rosell). Then, the reflection of a sinister-looking man clad in a suit and top hat starts appearing in the mirror—and into their midst...

Reyes has always been an adept storyteller, but unlike Chito Roño—who has an eerie feel and aptitude for the macabre ("Sukob," "Feng Shui")—Joey's forays into horror and suspense have not been his strongest. At best, they are hit-and-miss propositions.

In "Karma," the narrative faux that weighs down suspension of disbelief rests in the fact that its female protagonists don't even like antique furniture, yet they buy them, anyway. (And what was the ghost doing in the toilet when Aleli tried to rescue her son? Taking a pee break?)

While the production has likable actors, therein lies the rub: Gretchen, Rica and Angelica are by no means bad, but it's the actresses you see on the screen, not the characters they're playing.

On the other hand, Eurasians Ramsay and Rosell, despite their decorative roles, deserve special mention for delivering above-par performances—not to mention their good command of Tagalog.



"SHAKE, RATTLE AND ROLL." The horror franchise has seen better times—and scarier stories.

Lorena strings the three stories together, but it's her character arc that's nowhere in sight—she is simply the requisite Voodoo Lady who cooks up the magic and mystery that bring mayhem and murder.

Explaining her stakes would have made for a more cohesive, less confounding film. Without it, the movie fails to coalesce into a single, coherent potboiler.

"Shake, Rattle and Roll 8"

D: Rahyan Carlos ("13th Floor"), Topel Lee ("Yaya"), Michael Tuviera ("LRT")

S: Keanna Reeves, Iza Calzado, Sheryl Cruz, Manilyn Reynes, TJ Trinidad

We can't wait for "Shake, Rattle and Roll 20." Okay, I was kidding. Despite good technical and production values, the horror film franchise that started in 1984 (when its first directors were Ishmael Bernal, Peque Galaga and Emmanuel Borlaza) has obviously seen better times—and scarier stories.

Even the star wattage then was more impressive—the cast was good enough to tie up loose ends and smoothen narrative cracks. But that was then, and this is now. And, unfortunately, things aren't looking up—they're just, well, bloodier.

Rahyan Carlos' gothic tragi-comedy, "13th Floor," is, although flawed, the most successful of the three episodes. It follows a zany group of party organizers (Keanna Reeves, Roxanne Guinoo, Bearwin Meily, etc.) tasked by a couple

(Robert Seña and Isay Alvarez) to arrange a children's party for their 11-year-old daughter, Alexandra.

But, the young girl's party takes an otherworldly turn when her special "guests" arrive—the spirits of children who died two decades ago after a fire accident burned down an orphanage.

After "Dilim," Topel Lee's indie film about a *manananggal*, the director continues to perpetuate the myth of the winged vampire in "Yaya." The story follows mischievous Benjo (Nash Aguas), who must save his baby sister and his unbelieving mom (Sheryl Cruz) from the demonic clutches of Cecille (Iza Calzado), the nanny from hell—literally!

(Spoiler alert: It's interesting to note, though, that after the defiant humans defeat the bloodsucking rascal, they simply turn away as if they just had a hearty meal in a fast food restaurant!)

In Mike Tuviera's "LRT," passengers (Manilyn Reynes, Kempee de Leon, Cass Ponti, etc.) find themselves stranded in a deserted train station, where a heart-chomping monster preys on logic-challenged passersby. (Sample: When her worried father's phone call finally gets through, a frantic teenager apologizes for breaking her curfew, then turns it off—she doesn't even ask for help! Hello?)

Mired by its contrivances and predictability, each episode doesn't quite live up to its promising premise. Perhaps it's time to give the franchise a rest—no kidding!

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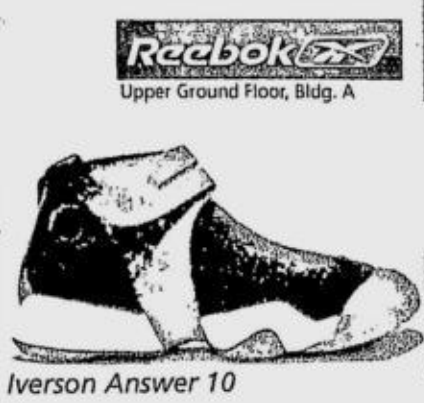
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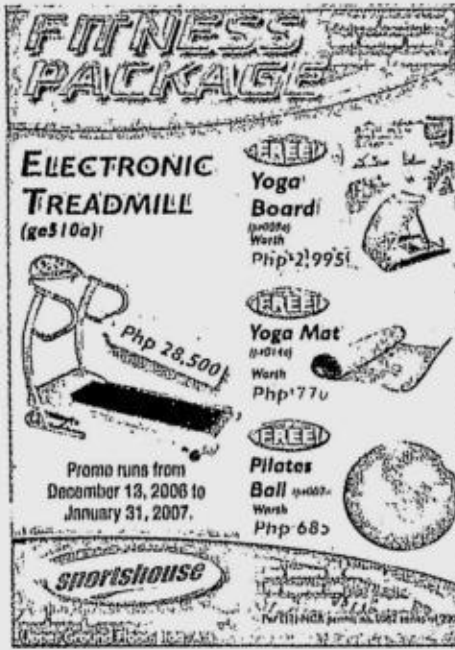
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YULETIDE STORY FOR YOUNG READERS

The most precious gift of all

By Nestor U. Torre

DIDANG WAS ONLY three years old when her parents took her to watch the Christmas pageant at San Lorenzo Academy. The school was famous for the beauty and drama of its Nativity show, and Didang was so thrilled by its pageantry of unforgettable images and music, that, at one point, she even forgot to breathe!

It's a good thing that her mother saw that she was turning blue, still with a silly grin on her face and her eyes dancing with even sillier delight.

"Hoy, Didang!", her mother shook her. "What's happening to you?"

"Oh, Mommy," little Didang gurgled, "it's so beautiful! I want to be like that, to play like that, next year!"

"What that—who that?"

Pretty girl

Didang pointed to the very pale and pretty girl playing the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Didang's mother and father looked at each other uneasily. Their daughter was cute and lovable in her own endearing way, but very pale and pretty she wasn't!

In fact, she was dark, she was chubby, she had a pug nose—and a front tooth that always seemed to be missing.

Didang was the best daughter in the world to her parents, but the logical choice to play the Blessed Virgin Mary in San Lorenzo Academy's spectacular Christmas pageant, she definitely wasn't!

But, Didang's parents didn't want to break her heart, so they said nothing. So, as the days turned to weeks, and the weeks to months, Didang excitedly planned how she would play the Virgin Mary in the next



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

year's pageant.

She was so determined to play Mary that she secretly rehearsed for it. At night, in her room, she would wear a pale blue bedsheet as a veil, wrap her favorite doll in a white towel, face a big mirror and practice her part over and over again, until she got it just right.

Cold and raining

Didang remembered everything that the pale and pretty pageant Mary did, and imitated it to the very last detail—the slow way she walked, how gently she held the Baby Jesus, oh, so lovingly in her arms, how she wept a little as the Baby cried because the stable was open to the elements and it was cold and raining—everything!

In her mind's eye, Didang saw herself transformed into the perfect Mary—so lovely and

gentle, and so full of a mother's love for her precious child.

Never mind if the mirror reflected someone completely different—a chubby girl with a missing front tooth, dressed in a bedsheet and holding a doll wrapped in a towel. She just didn't see the difference, that's all there was to it!

Auditions

Well, when October came around the following year, Miss Pitogo, the school's arts teacher and the Christmas pageant's director for the past 12 years, announced that auditions for participants in the new Nativity show would be held at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday in the Multi-Purpose Hall—and Didang made sure she was the first to line up.

She smiled her best smile when Miss Pitogo walked in, so

she would make a good first impression. —But that was a mistake, because while her original missing front tooth had grown in, another front tooth had fallen out days before, so Didang still had her "signature" gap-toothed smile.

—A Mama Mary with a missing front tooth? Perish the thought!

In any case, Miss Pitogo went about the auditions efficiently, objectively and encouragingly, so the 30 or so children who had showed up were cast in the roles right for them in only a little over an hour.

Cast

Miss Pitogo then announced the cast for the 2006 Christmas pageant, and one by one, the children stood and took their places onstage. When it came to the girl

who would play Mary, Miss Pitogo announced the name of—?

Well, it wasn't Didang.

The girl who was chosen, Leilani something-or-other, was of course very pale and pretty, and glided to the center of the line of children onstage, looking very pleased with herself.

When it was all over and most of the children had left, Didang walked up to Miss Pitogo.

"Ma'am, what is my part?" she asked softly, afraid that she would burst into tears.

"You are—?" Miss Pitogo turned to her with a professional smile on her face.

"Didang Susi, Ma'am. I want to play Mary..."

Role

Instinctively, Miss Pitogo sniffed. Then, she softened: "Of course, everybody wants to play

Mary—but some girls are more right for the role than others, and Leilani really looks like Mary, didn't you think?" Miss Pitogo patted Didang's head, then turned away.

"But, Ma'am," Didang pleaded, "I want to be in the Nativity play. What part can you give me?"

"Oh, I'm so sorry, all of the big parts have already been assigned," Miss Pitogo said as kindly as she could (which was, not very).

"I'll play anything, Ma'am!" Didang practically shouted.

Pageant

"Anything? Hmmm..." Miss Pitogo's eyes flicked down her cast sheet, and stopped at the very bottom. —"Well, if you really want so much to be a part of the pageant, little girl—you can play the little, black lamb!"

"What, Ma'am?" Didang was completely thrown off.

"The lamb, there's a little, black lamb at the end of the drama, I put it in for a nice, little comic relief, you know?"

"I will play—a black lamb, Ma'am?"

"Only if you really want to." Miss Pitogo was having a difficult time keeping the smile pasted on her face.

"—Well, yes, Ma'am—thank you, Ma'am." Didang was having a hard time handling her mixed feelings, as well.

"See you at rehearsals tomorrow!" Miss Pitogo fairly sang out—and she was off.

Didang was left alone in the Multi-Purpose Hall. She looked around sadly, and reviewed her prospects.

"A lamb? —A little, black lamb?" She sighed.

Smallest part

In the days that followed, despite the fact that she had the smallest part in the entire play, Didang attended all of the rehearsals.

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Let's have a Pinoy Christmas, please

By Behn Cervantes

OUR CHRISTMAS IS SO KOLONYAL. HOLLYWOOD and American culture have so invaded our consciousness that we remain colonial to this day, no matter that we allegedly take pride in our multi-ethnic and multi-cultural heritage.

We continue to ape the West even if we scream nationalistic slogans at every rally. As a result, we dream of a white Christmas, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, and sleigh bells jingle-jangling madly away.

I could understand GIs dreaming of a white Christmas when they were stuck in the tropics after the Pacific War. Instead of snow, they suffered in the sweltering tropical weather—therefore, dreaming of a white Christmas made sense. But, why do Juan and Maria dream of snow?!

Understandable

To dream of ham is understandable for Pinoyos. "Mother" Spain, after all, introduced *jamon* to us—although, to this day, many people prefer the Chinese type from Mandaluyong.

In the not so distant past, chestnuts were indeed roasting on an open fire. Our economy could still afford imported nuts, which were roasted in Carriedo and other shopping centers.

We also had real pine trees, but when the Cordillera Mountain Range became bald because of illegal logging, we switched from sweet-smelling pine to plastic trees. Albeit perfect in shape, the trees were not the real McCoy.

Formative years

I had the best of both worlds during my formative years. It was a wonderful blend of a GI-type Christmas and the traditional Philippine version. The *Belen* was the center of the Yuletide décor. But, the ensemble of angels, shepherds, Magi and Holy Family was later replaced by a plastic tree with multicolored lights.

Pinoyos soon started to celebrate Christmas as Americans did in Vermont. Local goodies like *lechon*, *relleno* and *embotido* and our delicious *kakanin* were replaced by turkey, ham, roast beef, fruit cake and sans rival.

Maligayang Pasko soon lost out to Merry Christmas, and Manigong Bagong Taon be-

came Happy New Year. We toasted with wine, brandy and scotch to the delight of alcohol importers.

Perfect

Coffee took the place of *tsokolata*. Whether it was e or a, *tsokolata* was perfect with *ensaymada* and *pan de sal*. Why then did we replace it with instant three-in-one coffee?

Sugar-rich colas replaced *salabat*, no matter if *puto*, *kutsinta* and *puto-bumbong* tasted great with the local ginger tea, especially during cold morns after *simbang gabi*.

Precisely because we have become too American in the celebration of this beloved Yuletide season, there should be a conscious and concentrated effort to re-Filipinize our Christmas festivities.

The Department of Tourism should be conscious of the sad fact that globalization will eventually eradicate national and ethnic cultural practices, unless we—the targets of this phenomenon—take serious steps to prevent their demise.

I dread the day when music, architecture and other cultural forms become globally uniform because we mindlessly accept cultural forms from the powerful and influential West.

Carols

Organizations like the National Commission for Culture and the Arts should look into this. They can produce records of beloved Christmas carols by Filipino composers that can be used by business establishments during the season.

Certainly, Felipe de Leon's "Payapang Daigdig" is one of the more beautiful Christmas carols. They can likewise encourage business establishments to Filipinize their décor and celebrations.

Why can't hotels and malls that make oodles of money in this country become the proponents of Philippine culture? Instead of patterning our décor after the styles fashionable in New York, London or Paris, why can't we stick to what we have? Certainly, tourists will find those more interesting, won't they?

Our Pasko, after all, is unique and truly different. Because the season targets the young, we should help them associate this special season with Filipino music, food and sensibilities.

Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon!